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Lord
of the
Mistifs

Lord of the Hundred Demons

– Hyaku Ma No Aruji –

**- Volume 2 -
Act 2 – Act 3**

**-Author-
Aoi Yamato**

**-Illustrator-
Maro**

[Otakubu]

【ACT 2】

THE TORRENTIAL FLOW OF THE ERA

Chapter 22

The Prince of Lemuse

“Father! Please reconsider! The Alliance of Mūzeg is too dangerous!”

In the eastern part of the continent, in a small kingdom which was three kingdoms away from Mūzeg.

At the time when there were rumours floating from across the three countries of how Mūzeg had swallowed up the surrounding kingdoms, stolen the powers of many Demon Lords and had steadily become a domineering existence.

The King of that small kingdom, as if he were scared of the war that may happen, was planning on offering up his kingdom to Mūzeg on his own.

However, there was one young man who was trying to stop that King.

His name was Hasim Kudo Lemuse.

He was the third prince of that small kingdom, Kingdom of Lemuse.

He had bright brown hair that seemed to blend into the sunlight and well maintained eyebrows.

Above all, his aqua blue pupils which gave the feeling of being sucked in were the main characteristics of that good looking man.

“Father!”

“Shut up Hasim. I’m doing this for the kingdom”

That’s wrong.

Hasim was well aware of that.

The one who Hasim was calling out to was his father, the current king of Lemuse.

A man with a body that was large and fat in the worst possible sense, wearing a huge, gaudy cloak that didn’t match his height.

He was wearing that with the look that it matched his build but the bottom of the cloak, possibly from always being dragged on the ground, was slightly dirty.

Hasim was extremely certain that, that man was not the type who would ever do something for the kingdom.

His father did not deserve to be the king.

However, his father's two older brothers died and because of some miracle, his father ended up as the king.

—You're a person who doesn't think of anything but fattening your own pockets.

Hasim knew very well.

The internal affairs that the king managed; everything he did was all in order to fill his own pockets.

Starting from the weight of the taxes he imposed, he would praise the ones who served him and beat up the ones who didn't and showed an extremely easy to understand level of corruption.

Lemuse's King was also an extremely snobbish individual. Thanks to that the internal affairs were a complete mess.

Using the reason that the really excellent people refused to serve him, he would steadily deprive them of their positions.

Hasim secretly went around sheltering those excellent individuals but even he had a limit.

—I promised to definitely reward you guys in the future huh.

He remembered the promise he had made to those people.

However, he was still unable to fulfill it.

Those people would also soon reach the end of their patience.

At that time, the king showed some more strange movements.

"We'll lose everything if we gave in to Mūzeg right now!! That's a foolish plan, father! Where is the guarantee that, if we lowered our heads to them, they would treat us politely?!"

"You idiot, If we served them normally then they would feel better. In that case, there's no problem in lowering our heads to them"

—He's a lost cause.

Snob.

He's even worse than that.

—He's completely rotten.

It's to a point that nothing can be done about him anymore.

Though while being his father, the king was so snobbish to the point that even he couldn't defend him at all.

—At the very least it would have been okay if you knew how to maintain the status quo.

The kingdoms that Mūzeg had swallowed up, were currently being crushed one by one.

An alliance?

That's wrong.

Though they claim to be an alliance but Mūzeg was secretly crushing all of those kingdoms.

Steadily eradicating them.

—Do you not know that they round up key figures and kill them all off every year?

By doing so, they remove any people who may cause problems for them and they make some who they can control the king of that kingdom in order to make full use of the kingdom.

If they do that, then they can make full use of that kingdom.

The king of Mūzeg must quite the politician to be able to use that much political force in this age of war.

Also, Mūzeg has the military might to back those strong political moves.

The proof of that would be all the Demon Lords powers that were collected with their [Demon Lord Hunting] , by Mūzeg's First Prince.

—Serius Brad Mūzeg

The man who leads the army of Mūzeg himself, desired the title of <Hero of Mūzeg> and was in fact a genius when it came to combat.

So there was actually a very good reason for the speed at which Mūzeg had been strengthening.

In any case, if Lemuse were to be offered to Mūzeg, with the political clout of Mūzeg, Lemuse would be pushed to the brink of destruction in the blink of an eye.

Hasim had that belief.

And that belief of his was correct.

However, Hasim was only the Third Prince.

Even if he said anything to the king, there was no way that he would be taken seriously.

As far as the king was concerned, Hasim was a loathsome child.

The king was especially sweet to the First and Second Princes as they resembled him quite a bit but Hasim, ever since infancy had always been outstanding. The king was even jealous of his own son and was extremely strict with him.

“Father!”

“Shut up Hasim! If you don’t like my plan that much then try becoming the king!!”

Though Hasim raised one last protest but the king did not bother to take it seriously. With his large pig like body shaking, wearing a large gaudy cloak that did not match his build, he shouted at Hasim.

After that, [It’s completely impossible though] , the king thought with a confident smile as he ridiculed Hasim.

At that moment, Hasim became resolute.

“Try becoming the king”

—Understood. Then I shall become the king.

Finally, the scales in his heart leaned towards the survival of his kingdom.

—Or, possibly, I was prepared to throw away anything that I was lacking in.

Without a single shred of respect, Hasim lowered his head and turned on his heels and left.

Seeing that, the king thought that he had finally given up and with a proud expression headed back to his own room.

The beautiful maids who were tasked with taking care of the king, quickly followed behind his pig like body.



That day, Hasim was in the basement of a small shed in the corner of Lemuse Kingdom. That basement was a secret place, only known to a select few individuals.

A place that could only be known to people who respected and cherished Hasim Kudo Lemuse, it was a rebel's secret hideout.

Hasim sat in one of the rather dirty chairs in that room and heaved a huge sigh.

"...It was useless... Sorry", said Hasim.

In front of the chair that Hasim sat on, there was a long table and around 10 men and women were seated at it.

Among them, there was one man who had a splendid beard and while stroking that beard with a finger, he sighed and spoke up.

"So basically, till the very end he was just a pig huh"

"Though he's my father, he's even lower than a snob. Even among snobs he's at the very lowest end"

"Haha, somehow your mood seems rather bad today huh, Hasim-sama"

The man with the splendid beard laughed lightly.

In contrast, Hasim, despite being royalty, was wearing a rather plain cloak. Which he took off while still seated, with an expression that said that it was too troublesome to get up and he then handed that over to a maid who walked over to him.

She was an excellent maid who had served him for a long time. It wasn't that she had extremely good looks but compared to the blockheads who served the king and only had their looks as their saving grace, his maid was extremely competent as a person as well.

Hasim found her to be extremely useful and at the same time, he also favoured her a lot.

"Thank you, Aisha"

You seem to be tired, Hasim-sama. Should I make some black tea?"

"Yeah, thanks"

“So that you become more energetic, I’ll add a secret charm to it okay?”

“So those disgusting medicinal herbs are a charm huh? Quite the realistic charm you have there”

“Recently, you’re not as adorable as you used to be, Hasim-saama”

“Oops, sorry”

Hasim light smiled at her, but then he immediately fixed his posture.

“Let me say this plainly”

Starting with that, Hasim faced the people sitting at the table and spoke.

“...I’m going to become the king”

“...wow”

“Do you plan on causing a coup d’etat?”

“Yeah, there really is no other choice anymore is there? Till now I kept trying to put up with it. I kept trying hard for so many years, hoping that I could somehow convince father.

...However, nothing changed. My persuasive power is obviously lacking”

“It’s not that Hasim-sama is incapable of eloquent speech. It’s just that, that pig isn’t smart enough to understand words. Pigs really can’t understand the words of humans, after all”

“That may just be true. I tried talking to my two older brothers but they’re both the same. They don’t seem to have any issues with selling Lemuse out to Mūzeg.

In the first place, they don’t even understand what that means. They’re just like dolls who know nothing but to praise father on whatever he does”

“That’s quite the accurate metaphor, I must say”

Hasim tousled his hair sloppily.

That act just went to show how irritated the usually calm Hasim actually was at that moment.

“I’m going to put my hands on my own blood relatives. I’m definitely going to hell once I die huh”

“No, if by becoming a king you save the kingdom of Lemuse, then you’ll definitely go to heaven. If you see people’s lives as equal then, when you save more people than you lose, your actions would be justified”

“I don’t like teleology. Teleology that justifies actions is dangerous”

“However, in this age, if you don’t at least have guts for that, you’ll end up getting hurting yourself”

“...Is that so”

At the words of the man with a splendid beard, Hasim groaned lightly.

“However, it’s something that I have already decided on. I might end up having to kill my father and brothers... Will you all follow me?”

At Hasim’s question, all the people on the other side of the table replied with a firm nod.

“We will follow you no matter where you go. You’re the one who picked us up, Hasim-sama.

If you hadn’t gone as far as to lower your head to stop us, we would have had to move to another country with regrets still piled up”

“...yeah”

“Even still, we were born and raised in Lemuse and we still do love this kingdom”

“I really do feel sorry”

“It’s not your fault... Anyway, while being kind, the successive kings of Lemuse tried hard to penetrate through their difficult naivety, to the point where, even as a child I looked up to them”

“Kindness and naivety... huh”

Hasim laughed softly.

“The one who put their all into sheltering Demon Kings who were betrayed by their countries was the Lemuse Kingdom of the past huh. The noble Lemuse Kingdom of the past.

“Even now, that blood runs through the citizens of this kingdom.

However, the one decides how the country is run, is the king. Since the king is like that, we can't really make any moves.

Until some time ago, Lemuse was ridicules as stupid because of how noble it was but, on the other hand, that may have also scraped away at the citizen's counterintuition.

...Moreover, above all else, there was Hasim-sama as well”

“Me?”

“That's right. Believing that, if it was Hasim-sama, he would do something about the royalty, the citizens probably suppressed any thoughts of revolt. The fact that Hasim-sama was, without the king knowing, somehow holding the kingdom's administration together was found out by a portion of the citizens. That steadily spread and got to the point where, Hasim-sama is now the final hope of the citizens and they are betting their all on you.

In any case, if a revolt happened from the citizens then the internal affairs of the kingdom would be extremely turbulent.

Right now, the king is completely useless but he is still acting as a deterrent with his title as the king but if that wasn't there, there would definitely be many who couldn't stay quiet for long. That's how dangerous the current situation is”

“I really can't raise my head in front of the citizens”

Hasim had a look of self-mockery but soon he had a strong light flash across his eyes.

“Even if I do become the king, the fact that the situation is extremely critical would not change. There are still three countries between us but if we do nothing then, in time, Mūzeg would take control of those countries and stretch their evil hands in our direction. It's not definite but if we had a war with Mūzeg, we wouldn't be able to win. Their military might is definitely well known”

“In that case, what would you like to do?”

At the question from the man with a splendid beard, Hasim answered immediately as if he had already prepared to answer that question.

“『Demon Lord Hunting』 seems to be rampant in various countries”

“Ah that news”

“The fact that the wars are intensifying might be the reason. Though the fact that Mūzeg’s prince has started using Demon Lord’s powers may also be one of the reasons.

At any rate, even if we fully utilised our supplies, we wouldn’t be able to match Mūzeg which grows at an even faster pace.

At that, I plan to bring back the 『Naivety』 of the past Lemuse”

“...Do you plan on inviting Demon Lords?”

“...yeah”

“Demon Lords with no place to call home, we’ll provide such a place for them.

In return, have them lend their powers to protect Lemuse.

We won’t force them. This would, till the end, be a deal”

“There is no guarantee that all the Demon Lords would be just and upright. There definitely are descendants of 『Tragic Heroes』 among them but even if that were the case, there is no guarantee that even the descendants would be like heroes.

Like the past, there is quite the possibility of Demon Lords who are extremely wicked mixed in as well”

“That decision, I’ll just have to pass it after seeing them”

“In the case that you’re wrong with that judgement, Lemuse would be destroyed from the inside”

“I understand that. However, if we leave things as they are, Lemuse will definitely be destroyed from the outside. If that’s the case, then taking an extreme step is also a strategy, in my opinion”

“That’s also true huh”

“The only thing I can say is, please believe me. That’s why, I’ll lower my head once more”

As soon as he said that, Hasim stood up from his chair and facing the long table, he lowered his head.

The royalty of that country was lowering his head to the citizens.

“Please follow me. In case it fails, please die with me. I don’t plan on failing, however if I don’t tell you that then it’s not fair to you. Which is why I’ll tell you the truth of that situation too. To die together with me, that is”

When the men and women on the other side of the long table say Hasim, they said,

“We’ll happily die alongside you, Hasim-sama. It definitely wouldn’t be bad to be able to die alongside you”

Once more, they firmly nodded to his words.

“Ah but, I won’t let you die. Even I, to ensure the survival of Lemuse, I’ll bet my life and I’ll survive as well.

Dying for the sake of your country may be a man’s yearning but until Lemuse stabilises completely I won’t die.

Even if it’s just with stubbornness, I’ll stay alive”

“That’s exactly what I would expect of the rare royal self-made rebel”

The man with the splendid beard, brought it to a finish.

That day, in Lemuse Kingdom, which was far away from the Lindholm Sacred Mountain that Merea and the other Demon Lords escaped from, the first act of a rebellion took place.

Chapter 23

The Prince of Mūzeg

The genius praised as the 『darling child』 of the age of war, <Serius Brad Mūzeg> was standing halfway up the Sacred Mountain of Lidholm, watching the extremely mysterious sight of a golden ship sliding down the mountain slope.



With his gray hair swaying in the wind, Serius climbed up Lindholm Sacred Mountain while the elites of Mūzeg stood around him as his guard.

—Even though I said I didn't need it, they still came along.

He looked around himself and closely observed his subordinates who were exaggeratedly walking close to each other.

Those subordinates of his, who were soldiers of Mūzeg's army, had a resolute expression on their faces and showed off a fearless attitude and along with their well trained bodies wrapped in black armour, they gave off an intimidating air while climbing up the mountain.

Halfway up Lindholm Sacred Mountain, inside the cave like holes that had increased considerably, seeing weird unknown things wandering around those caves, their expressions tightened up.

At the same time, their mood gave off a considerable amount of blood-thirst.

—Spirits, huh?

Ever since he was a child, Serius didn't hold much interest towards such things. However, seeing those things in the depth of the caves, he felt a strong curiosity gush forth.

Is it alive or is it dead? Is it a physical body or is it a spirit body?
They were bodies that he really didn't understand much.

It may be that, if a living being gets haunted by a ghost with a grudge, they may become

like that.

It was as if it was a mass of flesh raising a shrill voice.

—Are spirits really things with such little dignity?

The place they were currently headed towards, Lindholm Sacred mountain's mountain top, though rumored but was said to have "Heroic Spirits" living there.

Serius didn't believe those rumours.

For one reason or the other, Lindholm's mountain top was a place that people never went to, so hoping for some fantasy, that rumour was probably created.

In any age, people like to leave behind dreams that could never be fulfilled.

If they left them behind in places that could be easily accessed, the truth would be immediately found out so they go out of their way to leave them behind in places that can't be easily accessed.

—That won't happen to me.

Thinking that, he looked up at the mountain top.

"Oi, do you really think there are heroic spirits at the mountain top?"

Serius suddenly turned to the subordinate who was closest to him and asked him a question.

That soldier, suddenly being asked by Serius, as if he were extremely nervous, answered in a trembling voice.

"Wh, Who knows... , I'm the type who believes in such things and there was also the case of that walking lump of flesh from earlier... They might just be real"

While looking like he was drawing back, the soldier spoke up.

In response to that, Serius abruptly laughed lightly.

"I see, well, that would be the case huh. After seeing that thing from earlier, it might be odd to be sure that there isn't any. Though, it could also be thought of as the result of someone's technique"

"A type of necromancy?"

“There were Demon Lords who have pursued that stuff as well. Especially long ago. —The Demon Lord famous for necromancy at that time, for the sake of his research, used quite a lot of humans as a sacrifice and was hunted down by the Heroes. Though, nowadays, there really aren’t such obvious [Demon Lords] anymore”

Serius, once again, looked up at the mountain top.

“Well whatever, if there really are heroic spirits at the mountain top... we’ll just take their powers as well”

“If it’s Serius-sama, then it would be very easy!”

The soldiers of Mūzeg looked at Serius with eyes of an ardent admirer.

Feeling those gazes, Serius felt a vague anxiety.

However, he had no idea why he felt that anxiety, he didn’t know what he had imagined which lead to that anxiety nor could he figure out any solid reason for that feeling.

Despite that, if he felt anxiety then the cause could be his innate talent which rang an alarm that exceeded his own understanding.

It was probably close to foreboding or maybe a sixth sense.

However, as someone who was both a soldier as well as royalty, in both politics and military affairs, Serius was always rational. Due to that, he decided to ignore that unknown sense of anxiety he felt earlier.

If he let it be, that alarm in his head would be extremely annoying so he used some appropriate reasoning to stop it.

—Well, I am a Hero for these guys.

Serius was already aware that he was being worshiped by the soldiers.

That was why, looking at it objectively, he thought that if he accompanied them, they would probably hold some hopes and dreams towards him.

—What am I, a land for unreachable dreams?

He thought it was a little weird.

Hoping that the dreams of heroic spirits existing at the mountain top was slightly different but it was also possible that there were some similarities.

—The difference is probably just that, one is close by while the other one is far away... huh?

Due to that, the thought he had at first, 『Even though I said I didn't need it, they still came along』 was something he could somehow understand now.

—Being a member of royalty who has come out to the frontlines, though they are my retainers, they are still, at the end of the day, commoners. They probably feel obligated to protect me.

It's different to leaving their dreams at places that can't be reached. There is a proper relation there.

Over and above that, since they have the power to protect someone, their desire to protect him gets stronger.

—It can't be helped... huh?

In that way, Serious got convinced.

—Rather, it would have been easier for a single person to move around without minding his surroundings though.

Although that may be the truth but, for the person who may become the next king of their kingdom to be roaming around alone would probably seem to dangerous for anyone to accept.

In the end, Serious had a, 『Well, might as well let them protect me』 kind of thought and for the sake of the entire army's morale, accepted the current cramped situation.

It was hardly two minutes later that an emergency situation happened to Serious and the soldiers protecting him.



Suddenly, they heard a voice coming from above them.

No, to be exact, it was a voice as well as a noise.

A voice that came from the mouths of people and a scraping noise made by something sliding down.

The one they heard first was the voice.

“Your Highness!! Please dodge!!”

Being told that, he looked up and what entered his sights was a [[Golden Ship]]. A strange ship that was sliding down the steep slope of the sacred mountain.

The very fact that a ship was sliding down the mountain, while sparkling and dazzling everyone around, was an extremely strange sight.

The ship was displaying a strange acceleration and had its course set to where they were.

“Your Highness!!”

The owner of the voice was one of the infantry division members who had gone on ahead and were stationed further up the mountain slope.

It seemed that, having noticed that abnormality sliding down the mountain slope, he quickly climbed down in order to warn them.

He tripped down the slope with an extremely reckless posture that would immediately make you impressed with the fact that he actually managed to keep his footing.

To the soldier who ran down while yelling, [[Your highness, your highness!]] , Serious replied by raising a hand and then immediately turned his attention to the golden ship. They would make contact in a moment.

—A Demon Lord huh.

He was still not sure.

However, he also thought that, that was probably the case.

—So that show of force was a failure.

The practitioner corps he had sent to scout probably failed. They thoroughly ran away from them.

The soldier who had run down the slope to warn them was probably not from the practitioner corps but instead from the infantry division that was sent afterwards. That fact was enough to show that, the practitioner corps probably faced quite the fierce opposition.

Though, that was an extremely gaudy ship and was easy to tell that it was actually made by a technique.

—In that case, there are Demon Lords there other than the <Sword Emperor>.

Based on the information from the scouts he had sent to the surroundings of the sacred mountain, there seemed to be many other countries chasing after other Demon Lords and they had all started climbing up the sacred mountain.

In the first place, since they were moving towards the sacred mountain, they had to pay attention to the movements of the other countries and so, in preparation for that, Serius had moved a considerably large force for the current expedition. So in a sense, it could be said that this was an expected situation.

—So the other kingdoms are also all fired up about using the power of Demon Lords huh!

Though it wasn't something that started at that time but since Serius was the one who brazenly took those powers and showed it off, the other countries seem to have been affected by that and decided to get their hands on that action as well. Though that may be the case, they couldn't very well just sit aside and allow other countries to get their hands on the powers of Demon Lords.

"Well then, first I need to do something about that golden ship"

Serius unintentionally leaked a small smile at the unexpected incident. It was a warlike smile.



Wars are nice.
I'm glad I was born in this age of war.
Serius kept thinking such things.

The avarice for power that the successive kings of Mūzeg displayed, led to a lot of research being conducted on the matter and gradually, books filled with knowledge on various types of powers were accumulated.

Reading a lot of those books, he learnt quite a bit from them and steadily accumulated power in himself.

Techniques, taijutsu, academics, oration.

Though he can't say that he learnt all of them perfectly, but he did manage to get a general grasp of the overall concepts.

Recently, he had used that power to conquer Demon Lords.

One of them had been the Demon Lord with the title of <Spear Emperor> , which led to him getting his hands on the <Demonic Spear>.

It was an extremely easy to use demonic spear.

The spear was similar to the demonic sword of the <Sword Emperor> which was said to have the ability to interfere with phenomenon.

Afterwards, he went around challenging many other Demon Lords and having beaten them, he would learn their techniques etc, and through self study, he would master them.

Though the powers of Demon Lords are extremely attractive but, it's not like every one of those powers can be easily stolen.

There are those whose bodies have degenerated after a few generations or those who managed to release the limiter of their brains. Demon Lords like those were ones whose powers just could not be obtained.

People like those, he killed.

Along with their abilities, he killed off the ability holders.

Simple because they might become the enemies of Mūzeg.

However, the ones other than that, the ones who had powers that had a proper form, he properly stole those.

He felt that he really should feel thankful for having the blood of the royal family of Mūzeg. Simply because he was able to get the same avarice for power.

It seemed to him that the resourcefulness that he displayed was because he was part of that genealogy.

—Well anyway, let's put a stop to this retrospective.

Having figured out the route that the golden ship would take, Serius got into his battle stance and looked at the golden ship with a sharp gaze.

—That's something that can't even be stopped with the demonic spear.

Their speed was also extremely fast.

Even if he somehow managed to stab the ship with his spear, it would probably end in the spear breaking instead.

Making a ship out of money, quite the bad taste.

"Get down, I'll stop them with a technique"

That would probably be the best option there.

" <Hammer of the Earth King (Alf Cruz)> "

It was the technique of the Demon Lord known as the <Earth King> , who was once said to have blown off the mountain top of a certain mountain in a single blow.

The technique would accumulate materials which were extremely hard from under the ground, condense it and after molding it into the shape of a hammer it would shatter anything in a single strike.

Serius invoked that kind of technique.

If he launched that technique against the boatman of the golden ship which was sliding down towards them, even if it were a ship made with gold, it would capsize and ram into the mountain side.

Though he had no idea what kind of Demon Lords were in that ship but first, he had to stop it's movements.

Based on their movements, they probably plan on escaping from the sacred mountain using this method.

—I won't let you.

—It's almost here.

The golden ship was almost inside the firing range of <Hammer of the Earth King>. Serius used his rationality to suppress the cruel smile that had almost floated onto his face and to ensure that they wouldn't get caught up in it, he ordered his subordinates to move away from him.

Finally, the golden ship was close enough to him...

"Hammer of..."

"...<Hammer of the Sky King (Excil Flora)> "

At the moment he was about to swing down that hammer, he heard a voice that was different from his own.

That voice announced the name of the technique showing that the technique had completely been activated. The voice interrupted his speech with those words, in an extremely elegant voice that resounded throughout the area.



He reflexively looked towards that voice.

From inside the object he was planning on swinging the <Hammer of the Earth King> on, from inside that golden ship,

A man with hair whiter than snow, with a figure that made him look like a spirit showed himself.

With an unbelievable speed, that man had invoked a huge technique with his right hand and with the same pace... he swung it down.

"!!!"

It was but, just a moment. A small gap in time.

As soon as he was aware, the man had already started swinging his right hand down.

—Something... is coming.

Serius felt a strange chill and he swung the <Hammer of the Earth King> , rather than towards the ship, he swung it upwards.

The <Hammer of the Earth King> caused his body to swing up and caused a huge blow to the sky above.

A roar sounded.

An ear-splitting roar that felt like it would tear the very air apart.

As soon as that happened, with a *Baki* sound, something broke.

“ ... ”

At that sound, Serius tilted his head and while blocking his ears, he looked up towards the sky.

The <Hammer of the Earth King> he had used and the Hammer from the sky that the man with white hair had used had caused a whirlwind of mana and were competing with each other.

The black hammer of earth and the white hammer of air.

The one which lost that competition was,

“Guu...!”

The <Hammer of the Earth King> that Serius had used.

Through the thread of mana that he had connected to the hammer in order to control it, the shock of his technique being ruptured assailed him.

He felt a great deal of pain inside his head.

In that moment, the golden ship quickly went past him.

Promptly, he summoned the <Demonic Spear Kurtad> from a space created with a technique and tried to stab the golden ship with it. Though, this time around, that demonic spear was parried by the <Sword Emperor> Elma, who suddenly appeared from behind that man, with her <Demonic Sword Krishra>.

It was the <Sword Emperor> he was chasing after.

『As expected, she was there huh』, thinking that, he realised that his spear would no longer reach the ship.

At that point, he decided to at least have his voice reach them.

“Wait!!”

His voice disappeared into the void.

It did not reach the ears of the several Demon Lords on that golden ship.

Neither his voice nor his hands.

Serius turned towards the golden ship that was steadily getting farther and farther away and launched various techniques but they were all beaten down by the techniques of the man with snow white hair.

“After them!! Don’t let them escape!!”

Serius yelled out.

Even though he was still supporting his head with one hand, he still managed to give out orders.

His subordinates started running down the mountain slope but, even Serius knew that they wouldn’t be able to catch up to the ship no matter what.

However, he couldn’t just let them get away, which is why he gave that order.

—It resounded.

That one strike from the heavens really resounded inside his head.

To be able to compete with his <Hammer of the Earth King> and over and above thatm be able to shatter it.

He was extremely strong.

However, he had never seen a Demon Lord like that.

Although, in this age where Demon Lords are a dime a dozen, there are quite a few Demon Lords who he has never seen before but even within the heroic tales of old or the demon lord's tales, there had never been such a person with white hair and red pupils.

—No.

If it were separately then he was well aware of Demon Lords with those characteristics.

—The white hair of the abominable <Leilas Lif Lemuse>.

The Demon Lord who was once known as the <White Emperor> in Mūzeg.
The Hero who was once known as the <White Emperor> in Lemuse.

Though it was the same title, the meaning they connoted were in contrast to each other.

Demon Lord and Hero.

That white hair was very similar to the white hair of the woman who was once called the most beautiful woman in the world.

And,

—The red pupils of <Technique God> , <Flander Crow>.

Serius had a special feeling with that name.

—No, don't just think about such things based on speculation. Flander Crow is dead.

Though Serius had no idea where he died in the end but he was sure that Flander Crow had regrets.

It's possible that, those regrets had him wandering around Lindholm Sacred Mountain.

However,

—He's definitely dead.

That alone, is for sure.

No matter if he was hailed as the technique god, he couldn't go against the flow of time.

From that time, the number of years that have passed are amazing.

—Over and above that, he had even taken that poison.

That's why, that was definitely not Flander Crow.

In the first place, if he were a spirit who can only stay in Lindholm Sacred Mountain, there was no way he would be able to go out like that.

While thinking that, for just a moment, Serious had an absurd guess.

It was absurd to the point that you would immediately say that it couldn't possibly be the case.

—Is that, possibly, the child of Leilas and Flander?

Even that, as expected, would be impossible.

There was a huge problem known as time, that disproved that theory.

Serious quickly got rid of those thoughts and once again, yelled out to encourage his subordinates.

"After them! After them! They ran to the east! Send a messenger bird to my father! Tell him to start a search in the east!"

While ordering his subordinates, Serious kept his eyes on the golden ship that was disappearing over the horizon.

As expected, there's no way for me to catch up to them from here.

The way the golden ship was sliding down the mountain, with no regards to its own hull, with a speed that could only be called marvelous.

As if it were a ship of the dead that would go straight down to hell.

However,

“Don’t think you can run away”

I don’t care if you’re going to hell but, leave your powers behind when you do.
Leave it in a place where i can reach.

That was him showing off his overwhelming willpower.

Serius who was called the 『darling child』 of the age of war, like his name, showed the willpower of a demon.

—I’m the <Hero of Mūzeg>.

That was the title that the citizens had him shoulder.

At the same time, it was also a title that he himself wanted to shoulder.

—I have to, in time, become the king of a powerful kingdom that would cover most of the world.

For his motherland, Mūzeg, he would pick up the buds of calamity.

And he would use the power of that calamity in order for Mūzeg to grow even more.

<Serius Brad Mūzeg> is the 『darling child』 of the age of war.

Chapter 24

The Wish of The [Emperor of Violence]

“Alrighty, we’re going to jump!”

“Jump~!” “*Pyo~n*!”

“D, don’t screw around! This thing is almost broken isn’t it?! Uwaaaaaaa! I can see a huge bump ahead!!”

“It’s fine! The power of money is amazing!!”

“That’s not a proper reply!!!”

The interiors of the mysterious golden ship that was sliding down the sacred mountain was in an extremely chaotic state.

Every time that the ship would climb up a bump, the inside would be stirred around and the 22 Demon Lords would spin around.

Since the ship had accelerated enough, the twins let it be and went back into the ship and enjoyed the rocking and swaying it to their fullest. Laughing continuously and seemingly dancing in midair.

Seeing those two like that, the <Fist Emperor> , Salman, as if telling them to behave properly, made them sit down near him.

He looked like a father who was being led around by his tomboy daughter.

After having caught the two girls, who would have been in a precarious situation if left alone, Salman looked around.

The first place that his gaze fell on was the window nearby.

There was one Demon Lord who was showing off an extremely disgraceful side.

“*puking*”

“Oi! Don’t you dare puke! What the hell happened to your graceful <Sword Emperor> style?!”

“*gulp* I, I’m not really good with vehicles...”

“If a beauty pukes, it’s even more depressing so just bear with it!”

At the window, with her neck stuck out of it, sprinkling vomit around, was the <Sword Emperor> Elma.

With her black hair swaying in the wind, her <Demon Sword krishra> , which was the reason for her <Sword Emperor> title, was thrown about in an extremely dangerous manner.

“*puking* ... Ah, someone pick up my demon sword. Urgh... it’s dangerous... *puking*”

“Don’t talk while puking!!”

Salman retorted immediately.

When he paid closer attention, other than Elma, there were other groans that could be heard here and there.

Seeing the gruesome seasickness, Salman rumples up his already disheveled sand-colored hair and heaved a heavy sigh.

At that point, his gaze turned towards Merea.

Merea, at that time was,

“*Puking*”

“You too?!”

Next to Elma, with his neck hanging out of another window, he was grandly regurgitating.

“I, it’s my first time getting on such an attraction... th, the shaking is bad...!”

“Why the hell are you completely useless the moment you step away from battle!? What is with you two!? Are you siblings!?”

“In that case, I would be the younger sister *continues puking*”

“Don’t show a weird stubbornness here!! –Ahh! What’s with these two... I’m getting tired!”

“Isn’t it fine not to retort then?” so said the other Demon Lords who were, for some reason, still very calm.

“Now that I think about it, I haven’t heard your name yet have I, Fist Emperor?”

“Hm? Mine?... I’m Salman”

“Is that so, Salman huh. It’s a good na... *pukes*”

“I get it! I get it so, leave the complimentin’ for later!”

In this way, Merea and Elma, like buddies were sticking their heads out of the ship and vomiting, murmuring, “Ah, the sky is pretty” with hollow eyes.
Salman then turned his gaze to the other Demon Lords.

“Money!! The money isn’t enough!!!! I need more money!!!!!”

What entered his sight was an eccentric man who looked to be in despair as he punched the floor of the gradually collapsing golden ship.

It was the <Alchemy King> Shaw.

Earlier, he had shouted out proudly that, [‘The power of money is great!’] , however, seeing him scream such weird things ended up just causing more anxiety.

Is it fine or is it no good? It was hard to decide.

–As a human, no matter how anyone looked at it... he’s definitely no good.

Thinking so, he turned his gaze to the side.

“Ah... , this is definitely going to make me sick... , ah...”

Next to the eccentric, the <Flame Emperor> Liliu, who had a crimson bird flying overhead, said that in a dull voice.

It wasn't as bad as Merea or Elma but she seemed to be quite seasick herself.

At that point,

“Th, this might just be a little fun... huh”

Hearing that voice, Salman turned his gaze towards it.

This time around, the voice was rather lively. Though, the one who said it was rather unexpected.

“Oi, you okay?”

“Ye, yeah. I'm fine...?”

The one who responded to Salman's worried question with a vague smile, was the Demon Lord who, even among all the other Demon Lords, was especially delicate, the <Devil> Aiz.

Despite having such a delicate body, in this situation, she showed an amazing endurance.

It was extremely unexpected.

“Aiz-sama, a little while back, I found some [Orange Licorice] in a corner of the mountain and quickly picked it up. Would you like to eat it? It's quite sweet and delicious”

Next to Aiz, sitting in Seiza, was a praiseworthy maid who took out an orange colored plant from her bosom and presented it to Aiz.

Her body didn't have the slightest sign of moving and her face had absolutely no expressions.

“Ah, now that I think about it, the maid over there... what type of Demon Lord are you?”

Suddenly, as if just remembering it, Salman asked the maid about her identity. The maid, Marisa, looked over at Salman and in a casual tone replied to him.

“I’m the descendent of the Demon Lord with the title of <Emperor of Violence> ”

“Uwaaa...”

“Why did you pull back?”

“No, well, <Emperor of Violence> is that right? Born into some battle crazy country and is the incarnation of violence...”

While talking, Salman suddenly bit back the rest of his words.

He wasn’t sure if it was fine to say the rest of that sentence to her, who was the descendent of the <Emperor of Violence>. The rest of that sentence wasn’t very nice, after all.

In that way, while he was stuck, Marisa, as if having noticed his hesitation, completed the rest of that sentence on her own.

“Yeah, the <Emperor of Violence> of the past was quite evil after all. He made use of force for everything and even conducted many invasions. –Knowing that kind of history, it’s normal to have a few misgivings”

“...No, isn’t that from the past?”

Salman said with a conviction that seemed to believe that Marisa was different from the previous <Emperor of Violence>.

Salman had no idea about Marisa’s past so, if anything, it was more of a [[Desire]] than anything else.

“You’re different aren’t you” was the question, that seemed to be hidden in his words.

Marisa also seemed to have noticed the intentions behind his words.

“...Well, I personally, abhor the deeds of my predecessors. It’s complete nonsense. Those people didn’t know the pleasure that could be obtained from serving someone and seeing them happy”

She replied with a nod.

Right before she replied, her expression seemed to cloud over slightly but, her words were clear.

The reason her expression clouded over might be because there was a conflict that couldn’t be expressed in a word.

In any case, the moment she called her ancestor’s deeds as nonsense, her eyes seemed to show a strong will. That alone was enough for Salman to believe in her words.

Since the conversation seemed to have taken a dark turn, he quickly tried to change the topic with a teasing smile on his face.

“The pleasure of serving someone huh. So, will you serve me as well?”

He raised his shoulders and, while laughing, asked, “How’s that?”

For, but a moment, Marisa looked at Salman with a blank look and then immediately snorted.

It seemed like she was saying, “You’re absolutely no good”.

“I shall decide the people I shall serve by myself. My first master should be someone who is stronger than me. My second master should be someone who is cute”

“What the hell is with those criteria?”

Being snorted at by Marisa, Salman felt slightly snubbed but he immediately reacted to Marisa’s absurd criteria.

As if she expected to be asked this question, Marisa replied with a slight smile on her face.

“...After all, if it’s someone weaker than me, I might just end up killing them by mistake while serving them”

That's disturbing.

He really did not expect to hear those words in a conversation about whether to serve him or not.

Once more, Salman pulled back but this time, her smile had absolutely no hesitation.

"Why?! What is with you?! Are you an assassin maid or something?!"

"If it's not someone who can handle me poking them, when I enter into my [Violent Period] they wouldn't be able to stop me after all"

"What's with that...?"

"It's like a woman's day of the month. It's a day I end up becoming slightly brutal. Please don't get a woman to talk about such things. You really don't have any delicacy huh"

"Th, that kind of cheap shy expression isn't going to make me shut up!! [Violent Period] definitely sounds like an absolutely frightening thing!! Don't make it sound as simple as a woman's time of the month!!"

Salman yelled at Marisa.

Marisa, in a very deliberate fashion, poked her head with her finger and made a "Tehehe" sound, however her eyes had no laughter in them. Rather, her face had no laughter in it either.

Pulling off a shy act with an expressionless face ended up being quite the eerie scene.

"...Haa... Well, you are a descendent of a Demon Lord. So you'll have some form or the other of power passed down in your genes huh..."

However, Salman quickly calmed down and said so to Marisa.

When a Demon Lord's descendent is born, there are cases where the child has the Demon Lord's affinity already part of its body.

That was something that even Salman knew.

That's why, there are cases where people end up with powers they never wished for.

When he reached that conclusion, "If I continue this conversation, I'll definitely pay" was what his sixth sense warned him so he decided to quietly obey it.

However, there was one last thing that he wanted to know so he resolved himself and asked.

"In any case, is that, [First master who is stronger than yourself] someone who you want to have stop you during your [Violent Period]. Basically becoming something like a mutually cooperative master?"

It was a guess.

Having heard the anecdotes of the <Emperor of Violence> of old, he could, to a certain extent, guess what kind of a thing the [Violent Period] would be.

In addition, if he added to that, what Marisa had just told him, [A type of power that she herself could not stop] would be the expected conclusion.

"I wouldn't be able to have them stop me then", those words from her had a hidden meaning of, "I want to be stopped".

As if to answer the hidden meaning of Salman's words, Marisa answered with a nod.

"...That's right. In a more fundamental meaning, it's of no use if that person is not my master.

However, if that person would use their own strength and stop me then I would offer even my life to that person. I would become a maid who they could not be able to live without.

If it's someone who can provide me with the freedom to do that, I have no qualms with offering all of myself"

Listening to her speech and the seeing the strong emotions in her purple eyes, Salman just said,

"...Is that so"

He, then, stopped asking her any further.

In reality, he really wanted to ask her further.

“In case that master is not able to stop you?”

However, he felt that it would be rather dangerous to ask something like that in this situation. He hesitated because he didn't know how that question would affect her.

In this situation, where they were all escaping together, it may not be a situation that should just be left as it is.

Even then, Salman did not have the courage.

In this situation, he didn't have the 『unreserved courage』 to step that far in and ask her something like that.

However in the end,

“...It's fine. If, because of me, this group ends up in a dangerous situation, I'll leave by myself. That's why, it's fine.

There's no need for you to be that worried about it”

Marisa said with a faint smile, as if she could see everything that he was thinking about.

Normally, she would have a smile that had no emotions to it, like a doll. However, right now, her smile seemed to have a tinge of sadness in it.

Suddenly, Aiz, who had been quietly listening to their conversation from the side, placed her hand on Marisa's hand.

“Are you okay?”, she asked with a worried face.

Marisa looked at Aiz and replied with a gentleness she only showed her.

“However, I have finally met someone who has shown me that 『Possibility』. It may just have been a coincidence but, I still end up thinking of it as 『a meeting through fate』, like a maiden. That is why, though I know that it's shameless, I can't help but hold onto that hope...”

Before anyone knew, Marisa's gaze had moved away from both Aiz and Salman and

was looking towards a completely different direction.
Marisa's gaze seemed to land on Merea's back.
At that moment, Salman got a rough idea of her wish.

The conversation finally died down and ended up with a mood that made it hard to say anything.

Marisa kept looking down and had the usual emotionless smile on her face.
Salman also, for a moment, looked down and shut up but he couldn't handle being quiet like that for too long and quickly looked up and at Merea's back.

Since, she herself had not yet clearly said that she was placing her hopes and wishes onto Merea so, he couldn't very well be the first one to say it out loud.

But he did think things like, "Work hard" or "Please help her" would be okay to say.

Thinking that, Salman approached Merea.

He quickly reached Merea, who had his snow white hair swaying wildly in the wind.

–Alright!

“*Puking vigorously*”

“You ruined it!! How much can you possibly puke!?!? You completely ruined it!!!”

He ended up retorting unconsciously.

In the end, he couldn't offer any of those words of encouragement.

Chapter 25

The meaning of those words are

“So, this is falling towards the east right? Though it looks like it’s about time that it falls apart”

“It’ll reach the base of the mountain. I estimated that much before I made this ship. It’s just that, the gold peeling off, happened slightly sooner than expected so I was just slightly shocked.

Don’t look down on it! The power of money! Don’t look down on it!!”

“A, ah, no, even if you’re that forceful... It’s not like I’m looking down on it...”

The <Alchemy King> Shaw, quickly approached the <Fist Emperor> Salman with a convincing expression.

The previously chaotic ship had also calmed down quite a bit and as they got closer to the foot of the mountain, the slope became considerably more gently.

Due to this, their speed fell as well and the unevenness of the slope reduced quite a bit as well.

Afterwards, with an 『as far as we can go』 feeling, they borrowed the powers of the ice and water techniques of the twins and had the ship descend further.

“...So, what do we do after we get to from the mountain? We somehow managed to get past the main force of Mūzeg’s army but if we keep going towards the east like this, Mūzeg’s country itself would be there. In the surroundings, the countries of their alliance are also there...”

As soon as he said it, as if he remembered something, Salman added to his own words.

“...No, there are also the <Three Countries> which have separated from Mūzeg huh. But, those three countries are much deeper in... there’s also the problem of them being next to Mūzeg...”

“Besides, though you can say that those three countries have gotten independence from Mūzeg but, in the past, they have been known to force Demon Lords to go to war and had them die for their countries.

Though there is the issue of them being right across a plain from Mūzeg but over everything else, the problem is that, in the past they have participated in actions similar to Demon Lord hunting. That would probably be the biggest obstacle for us”

Replying to Salman’s words was Shaw, who added further information. Unlike his previous appearance, he had an extremely serious expression.

“Heyy... Every direction is much the same but, isn’t the east, especially messed up right now?... Isn’t there any decent place we can go to...?”

Salman went through these thoughts over and over and as if he had gone a full circle, he stopped and heaved a heavy sigh.

The other Demon Lords also seemed to be deep in thought and they all, one by one, showed a thoughtful expression before groaning.

Shaw, who had been paying attention to those expressions. Though he had his own thoughts on the matter, considering he was one of the people to decide on running to the east but, he still kept quiet and waited to see if the other Demon Lords had any other ideas.

If they were able to come up with a better idea, he would, without a moment’s hesitation, choose that.

“Fundamentally speaking, we can’t let our guards down with any countries that are currently at war. If the situation worsens, they might just turn around and say, [lend us your powers]. Though, [lend] might still be fine but the moment we refuse, it would just change to a [hand it over] and we’d be back to square one. Though it’s a horrible image but, it’s something that has a high chance of happening.

...At least if there was a place that would have a proper negotiation...”

Suddenly, the <Flame Emperor> Lilium, while scooping up her crimson hair, joined in on the conversation.

It seemed like her seasickness had abated considerably and her voice showed obvious signs of vigor.

Lilium seemed to be rather accepting of the fact that she was a Demon Lord, or at least that is what her words sounded like.

More accurately, 『There's no way for us to get away from wars』 was what she seemed to be saying in a roundabout fashion.

It was a truth that was hard to accept. Though it was hard to accept, her objectivity was indeed rational.

No matter how much they whine, the label of Demon Lord would not disappear.

In the worst case, they might have to use their powers as a Demon Lord as compensation.

All of that, in an effort to obtain a 『place to belong』 which could help them get rid of any evil reaching out to them.

At the very least, the minimum requirement that the Demon Lords were looking for, was a place that wouldn't just start killing them off as and when they felt like it.

Of course, the ideal place would be one, that let them live their lives peacefully without having to fight all the time. However, in the current situation, that would just be a dream within a dream.

If they kept relying on such a dream, they would definitely end up deceived and over and above that, being careless like that would only hurt them.

In that case, it would be better to let go of those rose-tinted glasses and face the situation in a more objective way. That would definitely lead to a considerably higher chance of surviving in the future.

In that sense, Lilium was quite rational.

“ ... ”

Lilium's words ended up destroying the empty hopes that the other Demon Lords had and in one go, brought them face to face with a cruel reality.

Even though the majority of them had such groundless hopes, Lilium's words may have felt like a spear passing right through them.

That spear destroyed the one place they had created which could help their hearts

relax a little.

Even then, Lilium's rational words were the right ones for the current situation.

A place that had the possibility of providing them with the [anticipation] of some hope is still fine but this kind of convenient [dream] would just lead all 22 of them into a situation where their very lives were in danger. That kind of a situation was quite close.

"Well, rather than being threatened, a negotiation is still considerably better"

Salman immediately understood what Lilium was trying to say and while accepting her intentions, he agreed with her.

"In exchange for keeping any threats away from you using the kingdom as a shield, when the time comes lend us your powers ——— or, so the countries would probably put out as a condition huh. In the end, it's basically a quid pro quo situation that we desire the most huh"

"That's right"

As long as they are not betrayed.

It would be best if that country actually went through with their promises though. That was what Lilium wanted to add to that conversation but considering how her previous words had already brought the mood down considerably, she decided not to say anything.

She felt that any further comments would have a horrible effect on the morale.

In exchange, she made an expression of giving up and said with a tone filled with sarcasm.

"...At the very least, even as a lie if they could say, [If you don't want to fight, it's fine not to]]. Doesn't such a country exist I wonder?"

Recently, none of them even bother to tell any lies anymore. They just come up with eyes full of expectations"

"Honestly. There are too many vulgar people around"

“Especially Mūzeg. They just put their hands on any woman they want to”

Salman floated a bitter smile at Liliū’s words.

“...Well anyway, we don’t really have much time left”

He said so after taking a look at the scenery outside the window.

The scenery he could see outside was slowly getting clearer.

That was proof that the speed was continuously falling.

“Saru~^[1], I don’t think it’ll slide anymore” “Saru~”

The twins who had their bodies hanging out of the window, deploying their techniques, pulled themselves back and with the same movement swept their long azure hair back and look over at Salman.

“Oi, stop calling me that”

“But, Saru~” “Saru, Saru~”

“...Haa”

Salman couldn’t even find the strength to scold the twins and just heaved another sigh. Though he did think that he would scold them later but they first had to quickly decide on their next destination before the ship stops moving and so, he let go of his thoughts to lecture the twins.

And so, various opinions were dished out on their next destination. Finally, Shaw who was examining all the opinions thought,

—“I guess it’s about time now.

Since there were no opinions which would have him jumping at it and the ship had also started slowing down/

In that case, he felt that it was the right time for him to put out his opinion and opened his mouth.

However, his words were interrupted by an unexpected person.

The one who knew the least about this world, Merea, while suppressing a groan,

joined the conversation.

There was only the name of one country in Merea's memories.



[[In case you're troubled over your destination, first head over to the kingdom of Lemuse]]

Merea only had those words in his memories. It was apparently something that Flander had said, or so he was told by the sky dragon Cortista.

—He probably guessed that I would end up becoming a Demon Lord huh.

That was probably why he left behind such words.
About that point, Merea was extremely sure.

He already found himself in such a situation so there was no doubt about it.

In any case, he remembered such words so, he resolved himself and decided to suggest it.

"Hey, how about the <Kingdom of Lemuse> ?"

"Hah!", reacted the other Demon Lords.

"Now that he mentions it, there was such a country huh"

The other demon lords made expressions as if they just remembered something they had long since forgotten.

However, in the next instant, a shadow fell over their faces.
At the same time, a majority of their faces clouded over.

"Ah... Lemuse huh. Lemuse would be... a bit tough. Ah no, considering this situation, Lemuse would prove to be a better option though..."

The first one to reply to Merea's question was Salman.

"Certainly, in a previous age, they were an [[idiotic and naive country]] that would shelter Demon Lords who ran away. But, that's a talk of an age gone by.

The current king is apparently horrible”

“Horrible?”

Merea tilted his head to one side.

“Yeah. I’m not too clear on the situation in the east but, even then, I have still heard about how horrible the political abilities of the current king of Lemuse are. It’s nothing but a rumor but, he’s apparently already trying to become one of Mūzeg’s subordinates.

Though it’s nothing but a rumor but the very fact that such a rumor started just goes to show how horrible the situation at Lemuse is now”

“But, Lemuse is still surviving even now right?”

“Kinda on the edge. At best, it’s almost dead”

At Salman’s words, as if agreeing with it, all the others heaved a sigh. Seeing everyone’s reactions, Merea thought, “So it was no good after all huh”. However, one of the people in the group spoke up, supporting Merea’s idea.

“Since we have no other place to go to, it might be good to first head over to Lemuse”

It was Marisa.

With both hands near her knees, with her spine complete straight, she spoke up without the slightest hesitation or the slightest fear at giving a different response to the other Demon Lords.

“Lemuse is far south of Mūzeg and even compared to the three countries, it’s in a much better location. If we take a large detour, we might even succeed in evading Mūzeg completely.

Over and above that, once we enter Lemuse and if we feel that, [this won’t work] , we could just leave Lemuse and sneak into the three countries.

As the place to head towards as a first resort, Lemuse would definitely be the place with the slightest amount of hope left over. So it would be the most ideal.

...Also, even if the current Lemuse said something like, [Hand over your powers] , we could very well just crush them. Unlike Mūzeg, there is plenty of room for resistance and at the worst, it would still end up with buying enough time”

Marisa's clear voice rang throughout that stagnant atmosphere.

Hearing her words, shivering voices were raised here and there, "Her main reason seems to be the last one..." or "that maid is scary..." were heard.

Also, Shaw spoke up as well, supporting Marisa's words.

In the end, other than the place Shaw himself had in mind, no other decent proposal was offered so, rather than supporting, it would be said that he was going with the only option available.

"Well, I feel that Lemuse has some possibilities. Although that feeling has some hopes involved as well but, it is still much better.

They have a considerably higher chance of taking us in, compared to countries that proactively hunt Demon Lords.

It was so in the past and compared to countries that don't even have that kind of a record, it'd become a basis for our choice... well, with a lot of difficulty"

In reality, the fact that, that option had almost been eliminated, was something he could not deny.

That was why, Shaw himself, had an ironic smile when he thought of that option that he had thought of. However, he did not think that, that option was mistaken.

Compared to the various other options they had, this one was definitely better. Having judged that, he made this decision.

That being the case, if Merea had not mentioned Lemuse, then he himself would have brought it up.

Since Merea had already mentioned it, it was now his job to be in the supporting role and help him out.

Marisa may have also had the same intentions or it may be that she said what she did in order to prevent a rift between the Demon Lords or so Shaw thought.

"That's... right huh. Unexpectedly, that may not be so bad. Just like the money-grubber said, they do have some achievements in the past. It's not like we can hold absolutely no expectations from them. Also, what Marisa said, [in the worst case, we'd have some room to resist] isn't wrong either"

Salman seemed to think for a few seconds before he nodded and spoke.

He then, with exaggerated movements and gestures, as if telling a joke, he continued.

“...Honestly, while we’re headed to Lemuse, it’d be amazing if there was a revolt or a coup d’etat and the king changes. While they’re at it, It would be best if Lemuse changes back to the Lemuse of the past”

“That’s quite the convenient prediction huh, Salman”

Lilium said with an amazed expression.

“The internal affairs are falling apart right? It would be about the right time for a revolt to take place”

“That’s true too but, even if they did do a revolt, the moment Mūzeg gets past the three countries to get to Lemuse, it’d be all over for them.

In fact, the chaotic situation after the revolt, would basically be saying [come swallow me up] to the other countries.

Well, if there is a revolt and the one who does it is someone as idiotically naive and noble as the kings of Lemuse of the past, then there may be some nice changes though.”

“You also seem to have quite the rich imagination huh”

“...oh shut up”

“Well then, the plan is to first head over to Lemuse right?”

Merea who had been watching the quarrel between Salman and Lilium with a smile on his face, asked with a doubtful expression.

Hearing Merea’s question, the other Demon Lords nodded.

Apparently, after Marisa and Shaw’s support, they had also accepted this proposal.

“Okay... Alright, let’s head toward Lemuse then”

Merea looked at all their expressions, gazes and nods and as the consensus, he decided.

Although Merea had no intentions to be in control but in the end, that is what it ended up looking as.

“Well now, you’re looking more and more like the Master of Demon Lords”

“Master of Demon Lords?”

Salman suddenly said that looking at Merea. He had stopped his quarrel with Lilium partway to say that to Merea.

Merea on the other hand tilted his head.

He had an expression that said, that he had absolutely no idea what Salman was talking about.

“Kind of like the head of the household. We left the final decision up to you at that time after all.

You may not think so but, we all ended up putting our burdens on your shoulders.

However, even though we thought it was unfair to you but, we still felt that it would be better if the leadership fell to you”

The Demon Lords quarrelling amongst themselves is probably the worst possible situation.

Even now, they are probably on guard against each other.

Even in that situation, somehow or the other, they ended up cooperating. Mainly because they knew that the [power to decide] wasn't with them.

If anyone felt even the slightest bad impression of anyone in the group, it would definitely lead to a very awkward situation.

That situation would spread and in the end, they would all end up going their separate ways.

Most probably, the fact that they are all Demon Lords, isn't yet enough to soothe any contentions that may creep up.

[People who are being hunted] as well as fellow [Demon Lords] , they held a feeling of empathy.

It was an extremely strong feeling of empathy, however, they had no relations as [individuals].

—Don't think about it.

At least not until we manage to run away.

In case they end up going their separate ways now, they would then end up, steadily, being hunted by Mūzeg or Saisalis and die.

Salman forcefully got rid of such thoughts.

“Until we reach a safe place, there’s a need for someone to hold onto the rights to decide for everyone... Not to mention, well, you have a maid right there right. Don’t you seem more and more like a master now?”

“That’s a horrible naming you know...”

“Lilium, you really do like to retort to everything huh”

“Well, it’s true isn’t it?”

The two of them started having another quarrel and that topic was left halfway.

—To think it would be [Master of Demon Lords]...

Merea suddenly remembered about the future stone that he had once gripped.

Footnotes

- ^[1] – Salman in Japanese is written as Saruman, hence the Saru.

Chapter 26

The Smile of the [Flame Emperor]

The moment that the golden ship reached the base of Lindholm Sacred Mountain, it's entire body looked worn out before it finally crumbled.

The way it crumbled made you feel that it was made out of something like earth.

"it really held up well huh"

The man who created the golden ship, the <Alchemy King> Shaw, seeing the crumbling ship, looked at the gold color as if with regret before he turned around towards the other Demon Lords.

He looked over all of them, then with a smile on his face, placed a hand on his chest and did an elegant bow.

"How was it? The power of money is pretty amazing isn't it?"

His bow had the elegance that would usually only be seen amongst nobles.

"Is it money or is it gold, I can't really decide which one it is"

"Haha, either one is fine. Gold is after all, the basis for money"

While Shaw laughed, Merea couldn't help but give a wry smile.

"...But, it really is pretty amazing. At least, that's how I felt"

He spoke up truthfully.

While protecting them, it brought them all the way down to the base of Lidholm Sacred Mountain. That golden ship was, without a doubt, a savior for them.

Shaw then shortly praised money but, he quickly straightened himself and brought the conversation back to the main topic.

"So what should we do? Even if we are to head towards Lemuse, we're on flat plains

right now. We don't even have any mounts"

"Let's first head towards the peddler's highway. If I remember right, if we go slightly towards the east from here, there should be a highway"

Lilium answered Shaw without a moment's hesitation.

"As expected of you, you're even well informed about geography huh, Miss Lilium. It's not just for show that you managed to enroll into that famous academic nation huh"

"Enough with the flattery. We really don't have the time to have such pointless chats. Mūzeg's black clothes and black armours will be right on our tails soon.

We can't get to Lemuse in one go, so we have to stop at some town on the way and gather supplies before going further. And so, in order to get to that town, we would need to get to a highway as quickly as possible"

"It's something like trying our luck now huh. It'd be nice if we could find some mounts"

"This situation itself was something of a gamble from the beginning. In any case, we have to go to a place with people first. If we just stand around here, nothing would change"

Lilium finished speaking and, taking the lead, she took one step towards the east. If anyone of the 22 Demon Lords had a way to travel long distances with everyone, they would have spoken up about it.

However, no one spoke up.

It could also be that, they could do something like that as long as it was just them alone but they didn't choose to do [that].

[Escape together] was something that was firmly rooted in all of their heads and acted as their moral compass.

That was why, everyone chose to run quietly.

They all ran through the sparse vegetation, near the base of the sacred mountain, as a group.

Running in between the leaves of trees, feeling the pale sunlight on their skin and

letting themselves be bathed in the cold air blowing in between the trees, they all continued running.

They had only just gotten down from the mountain.

Although they had somehow managed to get away from Mūzeg's army, that army could be at their tails in no time.

If it were possible, they would be happy if the other countries chasing after them would clash and they would all destroy each other.

However, thinking about the power that Mūzeg had, that wish seemed like it would never be fulfilled.

—Lemuse is still quite far.

The road that was called the peddler's highway, was something that was frequently used by peddlers and traders and Merea saw that the other Demon Lords were, in face, extremely skillful.

The one who left the deepest impression was, the <Alchemy King> Shaw.

Having stopped some peddlers who had just passed by, he skillfully negotiated with them and somehow managed to get carriages, along with the goods inside it, that they were riding on.

In total, three of them.

They seemed to be a merchant group.

Shaw then went to the leader-like person of the merchant group and from his pocket, took out and handed them several pieces of gold.

The previous owners of the carriages also seemed to have extremely happy smiles on their faces.

They all soon parted with the merchant group. Shaw then went over to the carriages, checked their contents and heaved a light sigh.

"Fuu, we managed to drive a good bargain... These goods, if they sold it off in the east, it would have brought them quite the profit.

However, those merchants seemed to be the types who would be more interested in any immediate profit... They still have a long way to go”

That kind of logic was unknown territory for Merea. The words that he spoke aside, he was not well versed with the ways of a merchant.

So, he wanted to ask Shaw in further detail but his eyes had glint as if the eyes of a wild animal and somehow, he felt that if he did ask anything, he would be stuck in some profound talk. So he decided to keep quiet.

Curiosity killed the cat. That was the phrase that kept going around Merea’s head.

Afterwards, the Demon Lords somehow managed to fit into the cramped carriages with cases like the twins riding on the shoulders of the <Fist Emperor> Salman. Somehow or the other, they managed to fit into those three carriages.

However, the biggest problem they faced now was, the carriages that the 22 Demon Lords had now somehow gotten into, what would pull them.

The original owners of the carriages had six horses pulling their carriages but in the current case, with the carriages having the original goods along with the 22 Demon Lords, it did not seem like the horses would be able to pull it.

There were approximately 7 people in each carriage.

If the horses were distributed amongst the three carriages, it would come out to two horses per carriage.

The load would be too much for them.

“...Well then, should we make use of my flame horse?”

At that point, the <Flame Emperor> Liliun called out.

It seemed more like Liliun had already spoken to Shaw about this earlier.

Even Shaw was extremely worried about, whether, if 22 Demon Lords climbed into the carriages, would it even be able to move faster than running.

Of course, if they had horses pull it, they would be able to save their energy and at worst, they would just move at the speed of a normal running person.

In order to get at least the minimum usage out of the carriages, he figured that they required at least 6 horses and so, he eloquently negotiated and somehow got the 6

horses from the merchants as well.
However, even then he felt some anxiety.

As such, Lilium informed Shaw that she had some ways to have the carriages pulled.

Which was why, when it was time to depart, Lilium raised a lively voice.

“It’s slightly flashy so don’t get too surprised!”

After prompting the other Demon Lords to be careful, she started muttering something in a low voice.

The fact that it was the invocation chants of her technique, was something that Merea noticed immediately.

While she muttered the invocation chants of the technique, suddenly there were large amounts of crimson flames that spewed out of her hand and as if it were alive it flew towards the ground.

When it hit the ground, it bounced a little, before it started molding itself into a certain shape.

It was a horse.

A horse molded out of crimson flames.

Over and above that, the horse really seemed to be alive.

A neigh, as if from a real horse, along with crimson flames escaped from its nose.

“Fuu~... Well now, from here till the nearby town huh... I’ll end up pretty tired but there’s no other way. I decided to do this after all”

It seemed that to maintain the horse, it required quite a lot of effort on her part so Lilium, for a moment, had a fed-up expression. However, that instantly turned into one to determination.

“I’ll show you the strength of the <Crimson Flames of Life> ”

She swept back her flashy crimson hair with a serious expression and,

“Pull them, flame horse!”

Ordered the horse.

At Lilium's order, the flame horse fastened the rope that ties the carriage to the horse onto its own body. It was quite the skillful movement.

As soon as it fixed its posture, it started pulling the carriages with a power that was unlike any horse.

Also, even though the rope was tied to the flaming body of the horse, the rope still did not burn.

Merea guessed that it had the abilities to choose its target of combustion.

The remaining 6 horses seemed to be extremely frightened of the flame horse and could not even pull the carriages properly so, seeing that, Elma, Salman and a couple of other Demon Lords decided to ride those horses and reduce the weight of the carriages.

Of course, the twins insisted on remaining on Salman's shoulders.

"Oi! This isn't some stunt! Don't just climb onto my shoulders!!"

"Work hard Saru~" "Saru~"

"Seriously, stop with that name!"

"I'll keep a lookout on the surroundings"

Looking at Salman and the twins who seemed to be getting along quite well, Elma took the initiative to scout out the surroundings.

Elma looked enchantingly beautiful riding on that horse but,

"She's not going to get sick riding on that is she...?"

That was the odd thought that was going through the heads of the other Demon Lords.

"I might not be okay with that either..."

Merea alone was in his own little world.

While being careful of their surroundings, the group continued forward. So far, there had been no irregularities.

Since they were able to get a vehicle as soon as they reached the peddler's highway as well as the fact that Liliūm's flame horse was pulling the carriages with amazing force, they would be able to get considerably farther away than they thought. However, Mūzeg would also, similarly, be using horses so, in time, they would be able to catch up to them.

No matter how amazing the flame horse was, they doubted it could give much of a competition to the war horses of the Mūzeg army, while pulling so many Demon Lords and goods.

In any case, they had to get to some town and get a faster mode of transport. That was what most of the Demon Lords were thinking at that time but, suddenly, someone said something unexpected.

"...Let's not go to the first town we find and move on to the one after"

Shaw said, with a serious look on his face.

All the others, in one go, tilted their heads in surprise at his words.

"Why though?"

Merea immediately asked him.

"It's a small town. We would definitely get the supplies we need but after we leave, when the Mūzeg army comes by, they would definitely know our destination."

"...I see"

"While taking a detour, we'll head to the town after next. That town is pretty huge after all, so we'll get everything we need in one go and not to mention, we can just mix in with the crowds. The supplies we need to reach the town after next is enough with everything that we purchased along with the carriages"

The carriages that the Demon Lords are riding on are full of vegetables and fruits. They were the trade goods that Shaw mentioned that they would be able to sell well

if they sold them off in the east.

“Well, I’d honestly prefer to avoid all the towns on the way but, starvation would be horrible after all”

He had a slightly regretful face but his belief of, 『If you die, you can’t earn more money』, was also there so he decided to divide it all amongst everyone and eat it.

“By the way, you’ll have to pay later. Since I’m the one who bought it all!”

No oversight at all huh.

『He’s definitely a money-grubber...!』, so all the other Demon Lords thought.

In this way, one way or the other, most problems that came up were resolved but, there was still one big problem left over.

“Lilium, you okay?”

“Kinda dicey...”

Lilium who had been handling the flame horse with her technique had a considerably tired look on her face.

“Keeping a technique of the biological type up and running for a long period ends up extremely exhausting after all... If we say the town after next then it’d be... <Duchy of Neuce Gauss> or the <Tot Republic> right? Since I thought we’d be going to the first town, I was careless”

“Miss Lilium’s flame horse is moving at a speed I didn’t even expect, which is why such an option even came up. Of course, if Miss Lilium is having a hard time, we’d move back to the original plan and move towards the first town from here. Though if we move past it, then we’d have to go to either the duchy or the republic without another choice”

Lilium spoke in a way that seemed like she already knew the distance to the next town. A heavy sigh leaked from her lips.

Suddenly, Lilium looked at Merea and asked him a question.

“At that time, you copied the technique of the practitioner corps of Mūzeg, so can’t you do the same thing right now?”

For Merea that was an unexpected question.

After all, Lilium herself should understand that 『it would be impossible to do』 as well. Maybe because she knew that it was impossible, she might have asked that out of the hope that it may be possible.

“...That’s impossible. Even if I can copy techniques, I don’t have the <Flames of Life> which is the nucleus of the technique”

“Hee, you really understood it quite well, huh. That my technique’s nucleus is inherent to me”

“I gave it a shot recently after all. Trying to see if I could help Lilium out or not”

“Ahh... is that so... You, in your own way, have been looking out for me huh”

Merea was good enough at techniques that he could proudly say that it was his 『speciality』.

Since he had been trained to that extent by the heroic spirits, there was no way he could say that it wasn’t his speciality, not to mention, they themselves had praised him as 『strong』. So he had quite some confidence in that area.

That was why, when he thought of helping Lilium out, he used <Technique God’s (Flander Crow) Magic Eye> to decipher her technique and tried to replicate it.

However, the technique did not function properly.

The mana itself would get kneaded but the let alone flames, it wouldn’t even cause anything to happen.

As he was deciphering the technique, he did have a nagging feeling that, it may not be possible and it ended up exactly as he had feared.

He realised that her technique was such that, if it wasn’t passed through a 『special nucleus』 it wouldn’t work at all.

“It’s called an Inherent Nucleus. You’ll find such people every now and then”

“Yeah, I’ve heard about it”

However, he doesn’t have it.

Lilium’s nucleus is probably something that the family of the <Flame Emperor> has.

No one from the family of the <Flame Emperor> were Merea’s parents.

In case they had been, he might have been able to receive that inherent nucleus but there was no point thinking about that now.

Merea, from that point forward, realised that he couldn’t do much other than fighting.

He had a feeling like he was worthless, boiling up from the bottom of his heart.

As if having realised his thoughts from his expressions,

“You’re fine the way you are... Forget what I said earlier! I was just being rash. There are no people who can do anything and everything. In fact, I felt quite relieved knowing that even you couldn’t pull it off”

Merea realised that Lilium was trying to cheer him up and unconsciously, a smile of self-mockery floated onto his face.

“Moreover, even if you did manage to do it right now, there would be a problem with mana as well right?”

The internal type of mana, was something that when used would decrease.

It would also recover but not at the speed where it could be used again immediately.

Even Merea wasn’t exempt from this rule.

Due to that, at this time, if he were to use such a technique, there was a high chance that he would completely run out of mana.

“In all honesty, I’m not very good at combat. That’s why, I’ll be relying on you when the time comes for that. In exchange for that, I’ll work hard in such a situation.

The right person for the right job~!”

Lilium puffed out her chest and laughed.

It was an innocent and bright smile like sunshine.

Seeing that bright smile on her face which just looking at it was enough to become cheerful, Merea felt a warm feeling spread throughout his heart.

Thereupon, as if badgering him with question, Lilium placed her fist near Merea's heart and,

"Is that fine? Just knowing that someone would protect you when you need it, is enough to calm down completely. The situation is completely horrendous but, I can stay calm... that's why"

She looked directly into Merea's red pupils.

"If such a situation arises... protect me"

While slightly sweating from her forehead, Lilium said that with a slightly mischievous smile.

Merea, while looking at that smile,

"...Got it. Without fail, I'll protect you"

Saying that with conviction was somewhat terrifying but without hesitation, he said it.

In time, Merea would think back on the his words many times.

Merea himself, had a slight premonition that, his words this time would wake up a certain determination in himself.

Chapter 27

Really now, who's the Demon Lord?

"Hasim-sama, there's something I would like to tell you secretly"

A few days had already passed since Hasim and his group had decided to rebel. On that day, Hasim was sitting in his plain-looking private chambers in the royal castle, thinking of how to plot against the king of Lemuse as well as his siblings. Just then, Aisha walked up to him with a cup of black tea and whispered in his ears, so he he stopped his mulling for a moment. He faced Aisha and he responded.

"Hm? What happened Aisha?"

"A certain person seems to have something to talk to Hasim-sama about. The detail are... this might not be the best place for it"

Saying so, Aisha refrained from speaking any further. She gestured to Hasim that it something that was hard to speak about in that place.

"You don't really have to mind it that much. There are no spies around. My father does not even have the ability to do that right. He desperately wants to believe that I am incompetent, so he goes out of his way to not find anything out about me"

Having instantly understood what Aisha was worried about, Hasim spoke while exaggeratedly shrugging his shoulders. However, Aisha still did not back down. In fact, she seemed to be even more adamant.

"Perhaps... [Mūzeg's]..."

"...that's crazy... Oi, are you serious about that? If Mūzeg's spies have already infiltrated, then the situation is already..."

Aisha's follow-up words had an immediate effect and it managed to scare Hasim quite

a bit.

Hasim, who had left the information about the spies in the surroundings to the talented woman, the maid-cum spy Aisha. If she, herself, said such words, then he was unable to not be on guard.

However,

“That was just a joke. We’ve already had our spies infiltrate the castle and have not found any suspicious individuals. But, we have to be doubly sure. You can’t be careless, Hasim-sama”

In the end, he couldn’t help but heave a big sigh seeing Aisha’s mischievous smile. It was also a smile of relief.

“You took that joke too far, Aisha”

“I apologize. However, 『If we don’t make everything absolutely sure now, when will we make it absolutely sure』 has some truth to it, does it not?”

“Well... that’s also true huh... Got it, got it. Ah, I kept only thinking about the plot and nothing else. I should probably pay more attention to the other things in my surroundings right?

Well then, let’s go someplace else”

Hasim took a single sip from the black tea that Aisha brought and then quickly stood up.

“So, off to the same place as usual? Who was the one who wanted to speak to me?”

“It was Earl Reynald”

Earl Reynald. He was the man with the splendid beard, who acted as the representatives of the vassals.

Despite being such a graceful person, he was a man who was adept at both politics and warfare.

“Is that so, understood. Let’s hurry then. Despite the fact that he speaks rather dispassionately, what he says is rather important”

Reynald would dispassionately collect information and dispassionately tell him that information, which would, in turn, make Hasim not take the information too seriously.

If he thought well about it, then, “Hold on...”, he would end up thinking that but then would be swept up in Reynald’s gloomy manner of speech.

Reynald wasn’t at fault but, his sweet voice along with his peculiar manner of speech would make Hasim feel like he was listening to a seductress.

“What does Aisha plan on doing?”

“Of course, I will follow you”

“In that case, finish up the preparations”

“As you command”

Since Hasim hadn’t been going out lately, he hadn’t shaved but now he was looking for a small dagger that he used to shave.



The meeting place was the basement of the worn out shed.

The place was definitely that but the entrance was not in the shed.

If a prince of the country was seen going into such a shed, it would definitely look suspicious.

There were several entrances at various places and the room at the end of those secret passages was the room right under the shed.

“This really tickles my childhood fantasies so I quite like it”

“Dust gets all over us. If it wasn’t for that, then as your maid, I wouldn’t have anything specific to say”

Although Hasim looked like he was having a lot of fun but, Aisha on the other hand, looked like she didn’t quite like him going there.

No matter how much you clean, it didn't change the fact that it was underground and the dust would never be removed completely.

If, due to that, there was any problems that occurred in Hasim's lungs, it would cause a lot of issues.

In case Hasim dies, then the Kingdom of Lemuse would perish.

Same as his other retainers, Aisha was entirely convinced of that fact.

While having such a conversation, they finally arrived at the small room at the end of the tunnel.

The door was slightly open, in such a way that, if someone spoke from outside, it would resound inside the room.

"I made you wait"

As if having foreseen that, Hasim opened the door further while saying that.

The door opened with a creaking sound and a cloud of dust floated up into the air.

—This again.

Aisha frowned as she thought that.

Without minding the dust, Hasim walked through the door. Aisha seemed to want Hasim to at least cover his mouth with a handkerchief if nothing else.

The one in question, Hasim, might surpass others in politics and warfare but in such situations, he was extremely dense.

Such minor dense actions could pile up and gradually get larger before attacking Hasim as a large force.

Since Aisha was a worry-wart, she was scared that, that might actually happen and she did everything in her power to ensure that would not come to be.

That was why, despite knowing that she was being rude, she forcefully covered Hasim's mouth and nose with a handkerchief.

"Ohh, you're causing trouble for Miss Aisha as usual huh, Hasim-sama"

On the other side of the dust cloud, the man sitting on a chair inside the room, looked at the two who just entered and with a mischievous smile, like that of a child, he spoke

up.

With his splendid beard rocking everytime he moved, with an air of elegance was a man in his early sixties. That was Earl Reynald.

“Don’t tease me, Reynald”

“I’m also not that great a woman to be called Miss by Earl Reynald... I’m very grateful”

“No no, if I don’t call Miss Aisha, Miss then who would I use it for. I’d rather even call you my own daughter for that matter. That’s how much elegance and womanly appeal you have.

So how about it? If you want to be the head of a family, should I just adopt you as my daughter and...”

“Earl Reynald!!”

While covering Hasim’s mouth with a handkerchief, Aisha exclaimed with a beet red face face.

Although she didn’t seem completely against it but, she did seem to feel reserved about something.

“Fufu, well, Miss Aisha seemed like she has other things that she needs to do as well, so a family name that stands out may just get in her way. Isn’t a maid who can also serve as a spy, something you’d never find nowadays, Hasim-sama?”

“In the spy country in the west, it seems like there may be such people though”

“Then, let me correct myself and say, in the east at least”

“Well, I’ll admit that Aisha is quite versatile. Though her only fault would be that she keeps putting that handkerchief on my face for long periods”

“Isn’t it your own fault for not covering your face yourself?”

“Quite the logic... Anyway, it’s fine now Aisha, thank you”

“From next time, please be more careful”

After cautioning him for the who knows how many-th time, Aisha took a step back.

Hasim took the seat in front of Reynald and once more opened his mouth.
He pushed his light brown coloured bangs to the side with his finger and looked at Reynald with his aqua blue eyes.

“...So?”

“Yeah, there’s some classified information that I would like you to know” [1]

“I’ll tell you outright. Yesterday morning, I received a report from my subordinates regarding Mūzeg, in that report, there was some interesting information”

“Hou”

There was a need to pay close attention to the movements of Mūzeg.
Hasim also understood that to the point of being annoyed.

There were still 3 countries in between them but, the possibilities of clashing with them in the future was high.

“Do you know about the sacred mountain known as Lindholm Sacred Mountain?”

“Yeah, of course. It’s the sacred mountain known as the place closest to heaven after all.

Along with its mysteriousness, it really leaves an impression on you. Well, because of that mysteriousness, the living wouldn’t set foot there though”

“That’s right. However, large number of Mūzeg’s soldiers were seen climbing up there”

“...hou”

Hasim raised an eyebrow,
He had an expression that clearly said that he was interested.

“What’s the reason?”

“ [Demon Lord hunting] is most probably the reason. Since the report reached us

using a messenger bird, there's no way to have our questions answered immediately but that was the kind of situation that was described in the report"

"...Demon Lord hunting. If that's the case then, <Serius Brad Mūzeg> would probably leading them"

"Yeah. While being royalty, he's also a valiant general who leads the army. He's quite proactive in hunting Demon Lords as well, or so I've heard"

"Hmm... The darling child of the age of war as well as a genius huh. Mūzeg managed to produce another annoying thing huh.

Do you think it's true that he killed a Demon Lord by himself?

There are also rumors that, after killing the Demon Lord, he mastered that Demon Lord's powers by deciphering it and managed to master it"

"Who knows. Unless we actually see it ourselves"

"That's true. Seeing is believing huh.

Anyway, if we believe that to be true, we really can't tell which one is the Demon Lord anymore"

"It's just as you say. However, the one backing Serius is the powerful nation, Mūzeg after all.

Actually, compared to the current king of Mūzeg, Serius may be much better off being considered as the symbol of their country. Therefore, nobody would be able to ridicule him.

...No, they are free to ridicule him, however, there would be no guarantee of their safety afterwards"

"There is nothing worse than a Demon Lord belonging to a powerful organization. In the past, there were such Demon Lords. They were actually kings of countries and they were all over the place but most of the Demon Lords in that age were actually evil and the various countries cooperated to subjugate them.

In the current age of war, let alone cooperation, they all have been trying to keep each other in check and nothing is going that well"

Hasim lightly sighed.

"Honestly, even though Mūzeg is the place where many talented individuals gather but

if even the royalty of that country end up being the incarnations of strength then... it's rather enviable"

Hasim exaggeratedly shrugged his shoulders but then immediately urged Reynald to continue.

"Then, is that the end of the report?"

"No, the most important part is after this"

"What is it?"

"That <Serius Brad Mūzeg> managed to let those Demon Lords get away"

At Reynald's simple report, Hasim stared hard at him.

He had an expression that clearly showed that he was extremely surprised.

"Is that true?... That's rare, a Demon Lord who managed to get away. No, but I'm, personally, very happy though"

In all honesty, having managed to run away from the army led by that Serius was extremely unexpected for Hasim.

He was extremely happy at this news and really wanted to applaud the Demon Lord who managed this feat.

"...hm? Demon Lord [s] ?"

At that point, Hasim noticed something odd about the Reynald's report.

Reynald as well, as if he expected Hasim to notice that point, continued.

"It seems that there was more than one Demon Lord there... Multiple people. My subordinate observed the battle between Mūzeg and the Demon Lords from a distance and he noticed tens of Demon Lords in that place.

Though, there's no guarantee that they were all Demon Lords but there were many people he recognized. So, right now all I can say is, it's probably true"

"Mūzeg actually climbed up that dangerous Lindholm Sacred Mountain after all. It's definitely Demon Lords", said Hasim while nodding.

“And, thereupon, they ran towards the east. In other words, east from Lindholm Sacred Mountain, so in the direction of the main territory of Mūzeg... as well as the direction of Lemuse”

“Hou”

“There was a report that the golden ship slid down the eastern slope of the mountain”

“That’d be a strange sight”

“Well, if I don’t see it with my own eyes, I’d find it hard to believe but, in the case that it were true... and my subordinate has no reason to tell such a strange lie... then that bad taste would most probably be of someone from the family of the <Alchemy King>”

“Ahh, that one...”

Hasim smiled bitterly.

Immediately guessing what Reynald was trying not to say and also after remembering the information he, himself, had on the family of the <Alchemy King> , he had a really bitter smile.

“They’re definitely not bad people but they really are flashy after all. Also, since it feels like they’ve sold their souls off to the God of Trade, people who can’t feel humanity in them may hate them though. I personally, like them. Pursuing money is one of the cultural objectives of humans after all”

“Yes, I understand their logic as well. Well anyway, that’s the case”

“I see”

Reynald’s report ended there.

As Hasim had expected, this was definitely not something that had to be told so secretly.

However, having heard the news from Reynald, Hasim somehow felt rather happy.

His aqua blue eyes, had a strong color of curiosity in them, like a child. A matter that, both Aisha and Reynald noticed.

“Send a messenger. Immediately”

Again, Hasim made a quick judgement.

For just a few seconds, he seemed to be lost in thought but then he quickly recovered and spoke up.

“Immediately?”

“Yeah, immediately. I no longer have the time to be worrying about things. Since the other party are Demon Lords, all the more we need to, even obstinately, bring them over to our side. In case there are any Demon Lords who know of the Lemuse Kingdom of the past, we need to immediately let them know.

The [[Naive, noble country]] of the past will be brought back. That’s why, in this age, we’ll give you a place to belong so, in exchange for that, please lend us your powers. Well, us asking too much would be in those lines so this... would be a negotiation”

“...a negotiation?”

“That’s right. In case there really are tens of Demon Lords, then if they try to, they could easily destroy Lemuse. I don’t know what titles those Demon Lords have but if it’s the current cowardly Lemuse then they could destroy us. That is why we’ll offer them [[peace of mind]] ”

“In other words, Hasim-sama is betting the survival of the country right? Betting it on that negotiation?”

“I’m pretty strong when it comes to bets you know?”

“I’m well aware of it. I’m quite fond of betting myself”

Reyland showed a mischievous smile and made a gesture of rolling dice.

“In any case, if we let it be, this country is done for. So there’s no other choice but to do it here”

“You say some extreme things too huh, Reyland”

“My superiors, the royal family, is already saying that right? Me piling on that isn’t

really going to be all that shocking in my opinion”

“...Ah, seriously. I feel like we’re going to get scolded by the citizens”

Hasim smiled bitterly once again.

“Well now, who knows. The citizens, rather than slowly decaying in this way, may want a powerful medicine. A powerful, effective medicine, that could fix a decaying body. This is Lemuse. In the past, it had used it’s small body to protect Demon Lords from the other countries. In the past we had failed but this time, we have to succeed”

“Yeah”

“For the sake of the one who died in order to protect Lemuse, the <Technique God> Flander Crow and also the princess who put herself in danger for the sake of that Flander, the <White Emperor> Leilas Lif Lemuse. Also, for the sake of this world’s most noble citizens who approved the policies of that Leilas”

Hasim thought back on those two [Heroes] and the citizens who placed their lives in the hands of those heroes.

Chapter 28

The Academic and Social Town

Lilium managed to do it, till the end.

She controlled three flame horses, day in and day out and somehow managed to get past the first, small town and finally get all the Demon Lords to the large city state of the <Duchy of Neuce Gauss>.

“It’s the first time in my life, that I’ve been this worn out...”

With a tone filled with a sense of achievement, a smile of satisfaction on her face, Lilium collapsed inside the carriage when they reached the gates of the city.

She probably relaxed because she felt relieved.

Merea caught her just before she fell and carried her.

The other Demon Lords also looked over at her with eyes filled with worry but Lilium herself, while completely exhausted, kept saying, “I’m fine, I’m fine” with a light smile on her face.

When they saw that, all the other Demon Lords looked at her and,

[[Thank you]]

Said that and decided to let Merea take care of her.

While laughing slightly, Lilium, who was in Merea’s arms, breathed deeply.

“Princess carry! If it wasn’t such a situation, I might have enjoyed it some more... though, if it wasn’t such a situation, I wouldn’t have been carried like this huh”

While laughing happily, Lilium finally closed her eyes.

She seemed to have fallen asleep to let her tired body rest.



Before they reached the <Duchy of Neuce Gauss> , they had already divided the work

each one of them had to accomplish.
They didn't have much time.

Although they had been conscious of not letting anyone trace their path but, since they had tried to run away as fast as possible, they might have been careless.
There was also the fact that the horses pulling their carriages were flame horses and although, they had taken measures to make sure it wouldn't be seen by others, there was a limit to it.

Even then, they were able to reach the <Duchy of Neuce Gauss> before Mūzeg or the other countries.

"Well then, everyone please go get whatever has been assigned to you. I'll go get our transport", said Shaw to the other Demon Lords.

"One hour. Please gather at the east gate of this town in one hour"

Based on the information they had, the territory of the Duchy of Neuce Gauss was quite wide.

It was a nation that was under the joint rule of the family of Duke Neuce as well as Duke Gauss and the emphasis on its culture was put towards the development of academics and a complete social experience.

Since the duke's house was governing the territory, there were, of course, the existence of nobles. However, since the nation, in itself, was quite rich, there wasn't that much of a disparity between the classes.

Taking the social norm called 『Noblesse Oblige』^[1] seriously, it was said that the nobles' administration properly contributed to the development of the country.

In any case, the Duchy of Neuce Gauss was large enough for 22 Demon Lords to easily get mixed in.

"One hour, quite the difficult deadline you've set for us"

The <Fist Emperor> Salman shrugged with a bitter smile.

As usual, the twins were riding on his shoulders as if that was absolutely normal, treating the twins as if they were part of his equipment.

Riding on his shoulders, the silver-blue haired twins, while shrieking with delight, played with his sand coloured hair.

“If we don’t make it, we’ll take you with us!” “Flat on ice!”

“Stop with that. Sounds like my butt would hurt!”

They seemed to have, somehow, understood that it was a pressing situation.

Since the girls were extremely innocent, during the trip, the other Demon Lords were also extremely affectionate with them. However, during this trip to the town, where everyone would move separately, they stuck to Salman who they seemed to be emotionally attached to.

[[Child abduction]]

[[Unfair]]

[[Do you feel their butts on your shoulders? You enjoying it?]]

“O, oi! Stop saying things that could be taken the wrong way!!”

Replied Salman to the many voices filled with a deep grudge.

“...sheesh. Anyway, Let’s get this over with”

Saying so, Salman ran off quickly.

With both girls on his shoulders, even then he was able to run at quite the speed. He brought out a power that wouldn’t shame the title of <Fist Emperor>.



Afterwards, one after the other, the Demon Lords formed groups and disappeared into the hustle bustle of the Duchy of Neuce Gauss.

In the end, the ones left behind were, Merea, the <Flame Emperor> Lilium on his back, the <Sword Emperor> Elma, the <Alchemy King> Shaw, the <Emperor of Violence> Marisa and the <Devil> Aiz, the six of them.

Shaw looked over the faces of the ones left behind and,

“Uhhh, if we move from the left in order... a man who knows nothing about the world, an exhausted woman, a muscle brain with no sense of direction——”

As he kept looking at them, one by one, he continued to describe them.

“A maid who keeps clinging to her master, the most sensible person but a misfortunate and helpless girl who has the aforementioned maid clinging onto her.

...Hmmm, the former three aside, the latter, especially the one wearing the white and black clothes wouldn't fit the place and is a little *that*. If I were to explain further, well, the title of <Emperor of Violence> is scary so it's hard to say but, it's *that* isn't it?”

“What is it? What exactly is it?... Aah! Has your brain also finally turned into gold so you're not able to think properly anymore!”

Marisa looked at Shaw with eyes that seemed like they were really looking at something very pitiful.

She covered her mouth with her hands, “Oh, how pitiful...”, she said while trembling with quite the realistic acting.

“Those expressions alone, you're really good at huh... Haa, well whatever.

In fact, if you think of it as there being three people protecting me and Aiz-san, it's not really that strange anymore. We need to protect Miss Lilium as well, just one or two people might not be able to handle it”

“I'll be protecting Merea-sama and Aiz-sama but I don't plan on protecting you though?”

“I know that. Which is why I'm asking this of Merea-kun”

Suddenly, Shaw turned his gaze towards Merea who was watching their exchange while laughing.

Merea looked slightly embarrassed at Shaw's use of honorifics so he spoke while shaking his head.

“Haha, It's fine to call me Merea”

“In that case, Merea. Ah, it's fine to call me Shaw as well... So, I earnestly implore you. I may be a Demon Lord but, other than the power of money, I can't use much else”

“In the current situation that is probably the most useful power though”

Merea held a strong conviction about that fact.

If Shaw hadn't been there, things wouldn't have gone so smoothly.

The funds provided to the Demon Lords who had already disappeared into the townscape was also something that Shaw had provided himself.

Apparently he has hidden his fortunes near various countries.

Although they were the same distance, the reason he chose the <Duchy of Neuce Gauss> over <Tot Republic> was because of this, it seems.

In any case, not sure when but he picked that up and skilfully distributed the required amount to every Demon Lord.

“At the moment, at least. In this age, at the end, it'll be the simple power that resides inside you that would be the most useful... Ah, but, the power of money is also simple and great though!”

Shaw added the words he always says at the end and finally started walking.

At the front was Shaw, followed by Merea who was carrying Liliun, Elma followed after him and finally Aiz and Marisa walked side-by-side behind them.

In such a way, they all walked into the <Duchy of Neuce Gauss>.



Shaw's steps were extremely confident.

As if he already knew exactly where they had to go in this <Duchy of Neuce Gauss> , he calmly continued walking.

Seeing his confidence, the others just quietly followed after him.

In such a way, Shaw walked onto the main street, where many young women, in gaudy clothes, were moving through in groups.

Walking along the street happily, as if they were dancing with weird steps, the women walked through. Merea was unconsciously captivated by that scene.

A stimulating mood.

A lively hustle bustle.

As if it were a festival...

It even looked a little fantastical when the colors seemed to change as people moved around.

On the sides of the main street, lined up like dumplings, were the citizens of the duchy, happily cheering the girls walking down the street on.

“Those girls are symbolize the academic promotion of the <Duchy of Neuce Gauss>. They are the students of the National Academy who work hard daily on their studies”

As if he had understood his thoughts, Shaw shortly explained to Merea.

“Hee~”

Merea, with a face full of interest, looked at the main street.

“Also, they’re going to be here soon”

“Come here? Who is?”

“Another culture of Neuce Gauss, one of their symbolic scenes”

Being told that, Merea looked back at the street with an even more steady gaze. Not even having to wait a few seconds, after the young women, a parade of young men followed after them.

Same as the women, the men were also wearing beautiful clothes and smoothly navigated through the cheering crowd and joined into the parade.

As the men joined in on the parade, they started calling out to the women as they liked and seemed to be trying to communicate with them.

“Academics and society. It’s the most obvious cultural feature of Neuce Gauss, where the people praise and respect the young people.

Once a week, on a holiday, they all gather in this way and have a type of town wide party-like event. That is one of the characteristics of Neuce Gauss”

Gorgeous colors.

An enjoyable mood.

Young people illuminated in the sunlight.

The people in the surroundings probably also went through the same path. The adults on the sides of the roads had various types of smiles floating on their faces as they saw the young ones. Seeing the heartwarming scene, some had expressions of pride, some had a nostalgic expression, while some others even had envious smiles.

The adults had, truly, varied smiles on their faces.

Seeing them, Merea spoke up with a smile on his face,

“They look like they’re all having fun”

Seeing the young and lively scene in front of him, Merea once again, had the realisation that he had finally climbed down the mountain.

This was a world that Merea knew nothing about.

“Once all the troublesome stuff is over, let’s come back here. They seem to be quite lenient to the participation of travelers after all”

Shaw said, as he laughed quickly and went into another street.

From the main street, onto a side street.

The intensity from the main street gradually reduced and after moving two streets away, it disappeared completely.

A slight reluctance bubbled up from within Merea.

However, Merea knew very clearly that he wasn’t in a situation where he could get involved in that scene earlier. So, without complaining, he continued on.

Though he felt slightly envious of them, it wasn’t like he wanted to avoid his current way of living.

Just one last time, he looked back at the parade from in between the houses, towards

the main street that could no longer be seen and with various thoughts racing through his head.



They continued walking, it seemed that they continued walking for around 10 more minutes.

Finally, Shaw stopped in front of a certain building.

Merea looked towards Shaw's gaze and noticed that there was a certain [[signboard]] there and so he read it.

[[Sherwood Firm]]

With a good handwriting, that was what was written.

The building was made with bricks and although, the corners seemed a little scraped off, it was quite the sturdy looking building.

Although it wasn't shiny, it had a nice finish to it and that in turn, gave off a charming feeling and seemed to be a stylish building.

At the end of the umbrella-shaped roof, a glass lamp was hanging, sparkling in the sunlight and it gave a nice accent to the rustic brick building.

Suddenly, Shaw turned his back to the building and looked towards Merea and the others.

"My name is <Shaw Jules Sherwood>. Actually, this is a branch office of my firm"

Shaw had a happy smile on his face.

It was also a smile that seemed to want to brag a little.

That smile, instantly turned into a mischievous grin and finally he placed his finger in front of his mouth

"Ah, of course it's a fake name, okay? Please keep it a secret. Since my ancestors did various things in the past, I had to build up trust in my name, which was quite hard"

Very deliberately, he closed one eye.

Rather than speaking, Merea just smiled wryly and while shrugging, he nodded.

As soon as he nodded, Shaw said, “Very good!” and while laughing in a self-deprecating manner, once again faced the building with a somewhat nostalgic gaze.

Chapter 29

At The Sherwood Firm

“It is a rather large firm in its own right, however, the actual number of merchants working in the firm aren’t really that many.

On the other hand, the people employed by the firm are thoroughly selected by me, which is why we can trust them”

“Since they were selected by you, they’re probably true to their love for money”

Marisa said that to Shaw while looking at him with scornful eyes. She said that suddenly with a sigh.

On the other hand, Shaw seems to have already gotten used to her attitude and seemed to just let it slide easily and instead showed a triumphant smile.

“That is exactly right. A half-assed love for money isn’t good enough but if they were at the level of a [money-grubber] then they would be much easier to trust. That would be because, as long as my business acumen is a cut above the rest, they wouldn’t betray me.

They would definitely not do something as stupid as letting go of a man who was basically a golden seed”

“...Haa, that confidence of yours is the only thing worthy of respect”

“Ohh, a rare compliment from Miss Marisa~”

“...!!”

Most probably, that was something she didn’t mean to speak out loud.

However, from Marisa, who kept consistently piling up abuse on Shaw, that was indeed, quite rare.

At that moment, Shaw had a broad grin on his face, which in turn made Marisa quickly shut her mouth with a, “Crap!”.

Marisa’s expression very obviously changed back to her [original expression].

“I, I said nothing... Nothing at all”

“This time is my win, right?”

“It’s not a matter of winning or losing”

“So, you make that kind of face even when you’re not looking at your [First Master] huh? Might it be possible that, under that arrogance you’re actually a proper maiden?”

“If you dare to speak any more drivel, I’ll tear your mouth apart”

Seeing Shaw’s triumphant look, Marisa quickly pulled out the two daggers hanging at her waist and held it up so the light glinted off the sharp tip of the dagger.

“Please don’t do that! If I didn’t have this, then I wouldn’t be able to carry on with my business! I’ll stop right now!”

“Please do that”

Marisa put her daggers back into their sheaths, turned the other way and stopped talking.

During that series of actions, she kept glancing towards Merea which was something that only Shaw and Aiz noticed at that time.

The man in question, Merea himself had thoughts like, “Their quarrel is quite stylish” and faintly laughed to himself.

In any case, seeing that their exchange was coming to an end, Merea decided to speak up.

“Honestly, I really am no match to Shaw. I respect you quite a bit”

Merea’s words had no sarcasm in them.

Since Shaw could do something that he could not, as far as Merea was concerned, he deserved to be respected.

“Haha, If we have the time, I’ll teach you the know-how”

Being complimented by Merea, Shaw didn’t seem to dislike it as he had a smile floating

on his face.

“By the way, how much would it cost?”

“Let’s see... Since you saved my life, I’ll specially give you a [[discount]] ”

“I had some hopes but, it really won’t be for free huh”

With his white hair swaying, Merea shook his head a little. Since he had Lilium on his back, he wasn’t able to shrug his shoulders.

“It’s not okay to offer it for free. That is something I’m saying for your sake
[[There is nothing more expensive than free]] is a very apt saying. If money is not exchanged, then the end point of the deal would become very vague. You’ll end up giving the other side considerable scope to squeeze more out of the deal.
That would be an extremely terrifying thing”

“I see, I’ll keep that in mind”

“For now, I’m the first professor of know-how. A fee will, of course, be charged”

“We really have to be on guard with you huh!!”

“Ha, ha, ha, you’re still too naive!”

As Merea hung his head head, crestfallen, seemingly having been had, the other people around them had a troubled expression as well.

Aiz approached Merea and while gently tapping on his shoulder, said, “Ch, cheer up? Okay?”, seeing which, Shaw had a triumphant look on his face.

In the meanwhile, Shaw raised a victory laugh and finally faced the firm’s entryway and knocked on the door.

After which, without waiting for a reply, he walked right in.



As soon as they entered, the first thing they could see was a long table for visitors. It was like a fence that divided both sides.

There were stone lanterns hanging from the ceiling that let off a pale orange light and gave the room a rather warm atmosphere.

“What... is that?”

Seeing those stone lanterns, Aiz had a surprised look on her face.
Marisa replied from next to Aiz,

“That is called a light stone and has been molded for lighting purposes. In the northern part of the continent, where the day isn’t very long, technology and industries related to lighting have developed quite well but, this is an ore that has only recently been discovered in the northern part of the continent”

“Is that, so”

Seeing it for the first time, Aiz had a strong curiosity in her gaze.
Not losing out to that at all,

“What’s that!? I really want it...!!!”

Merea had an even more brilliant light in his red pupils as he spoke.
It was as if he was a child who had found a new toy to play with.

Seeing them, Shaw showed a slightly bitter smile.

“If we go to the northern part of the continent, you can get these quite easily. When we get our next batch, I’ll take your shares into account as well”, said Shaw.

At that point, as if having noticed the voices coming from the entrance, a man walked out from inside the building.

He was a middle aged man wearing a monocle which suited him quite well.

With dull gray hair tied up in a short ponytail, he had a deep wrinkle between his eyebrows that was like a symbol of his apprenticeship, he walked forward with his rather thin body.

Only once he fixed the position of his monocle on his face did he finally look at the visitors with a quizzical look.

“...Sherwood-sama?!”

He suddenly raised a hysterical voice.

Seeing Shaw's face, it looked like his eyes would pop out.

The stern expression he had on his face while walking over had completely collapsed and he had a look of astonishment as if he had seen a ghost.

“Yo, Zaido-kun. Somehow or the other, I managed to get away from the fanatics of Saisalis”

In contrast, Shaw, with a light attitude, raised a hand in greeting.

Although, with just one look it might seem like the middle aged monocle would be much higher but the relationship between the two seemed to completely opposite.

Seeing this strange scene, Merea and the others, once again, confirmed that he was the actual head of that firm.

“I'm glad you're safe! I heard from the branch office in the vicinity of Saisalis that Sherwood-sama was being chased by the fanatics of that country, so...”

“Ah, So the information was circulated huh”

“Yeah, although, to think that you would run towards the east...”

“Quite a few things happened. The west was no good, the north or south were also no good, the east was the worst option but, if we managed to get past here then there was a place with some possibility”

“Hou, possibility... huh. If it's related to a [Demon Lord] then that would be... Lemuse right?”

“That's about right. Although it's not impossible to do business while being chased around but it is rather inconvenient. So, in order to have them stop, I decided to create some sort of a foothold that would help”

“You have my sympathies. If Sherwood-sama were not there then this firm wouldn't

work as well. Of course, we were all working by ourselves before we started working here so we would be able to do at least the minimum required work”

“Yeah, I have high expectations... Anyway, although there are a lot of things I want to talk about, we’re a little short on time. I’ll send you letter later”

“Understood”

As their conversation reached its end, the middle aged monocle’s gaze finally settled on Merea and the rest.

“These people are?”

“They are also [Demon Lords] who are facing considerably more troubling situations compared to me. One thing led to the other and I was saved quite a bit by them”

“Is that so. Same as before, you have my sympathies. Being manipulated by the selfishness of those violent people must be rather troublesome”

It seemed like being with the <Alchemy King> had given the middle-aged monocle... Zaido, quite some insight into Demon Lords.

“However, to think that Sherwood-sama was saved by someone, that’s quite rare. I thought you’d be on the side saving people though”

“That’s not true... Anyway, there are somethings that I would like you to prepare”

“I completely understand... You want me to prepare transport to reach Lemuse right?”

“You saved me the trouble of explaining”

“I’ll procure it quickly”

“Can I ask you to prepare it for 30 people?”

“Hahaha, you really asked for something difficult huh... However, I’ll do it. Also to show these people the infinite power of money!”

They are definitely birds of a feather.

Seeing the smile on Zaido's face, Merea thought so.

"Well then, let us wait for a while. Zaido-kun will prepare our transport for us. He's someone who has the entire commerce of the <Duchy of Neuce Gauss> covered so, he'll definitely do a splendid job

Until then, there are items procured from various regions in the basement of this firm so would you like to go check that out while we wait? Just sitting around is also boring after all"

As soon as Zaido gave a bow and quickly exited the firm, Shaw looked over at Merea and said that.

"...!!"

Hearing those words, as if it he would never have enough, Merea's eyes twinkled.

It was an extremely easy to understand expression of curiosity.

Seeing that child-like expression on his face, Shaw unconsciously once again felt a wry smile float on his face.



Shaw himself, during the the trip in a conversation with Merea found out that he had lived his entire life on the mountain top of Lindholm Sacred Mountain.

At first, he immediately thought that it was a lie and he laughed rather exaggeratedly but, once he talked to Merea even further, he finally accepted that, that may actually be the case.

Although he knew a lot of specialised techniques, he didn't have the same common sense that any normal person would have, nor did he know about things that were very common.

Though that didn't decide it all but he also seemed to only have information till an age long past.

It was a very strange deviation.

—Exactly who or what was he raised by?

Although he hadn't received any clear answers for that question, if he thought about the graves they built then a rather strange guess could be made.

—Were there really any heroic spirits on the mountain top of Lindholm Sacred Mountain?

They might really have been there.

Although they were just rumours or legends but, he had heard stories that there were strong spirits gathering on the mountain top of the sacred mountain.

The names that were engraved onto those gravestones.

Although he had heard the family names of many of the names he read there but if he also considered their given names, then he hadn't heard of most of them.

Also, there are countries which erase past records of Heroes in order to make them Demon Lords so it possible that, in the present, their names are no longer left behind.

—I guess we'll take this step by step.

At that point, Shaw stopped thinking about Merea temporarily.

Other than him, there was still someone who he felt like he had to think seriously about.

Rather, unlike Merea who was able to take a proper rest during this short break they had, the other one was a much bigger source of anxiety.

Shaw looked away from Merea who had sparkling eyes and turned his gaze towards the <Sword Emperor> Elma who was standing slightly apart from them all and seemed to be deep in thought.

Unlike Merea or Aiz, she alone still had an extremely heavy expression on her face. The air around her seemed so heavy that she herself might end up choking because of that heavy atmosphere around her.

To Shaw, it looked like the expression of someone, who was regretting having done something that was irrevocable... that was the kind of expression she had.

Chapter 30

The Man Who Speaks the Language of Dragons

The <Sword Emperor> Elma, leaving the other Demon Lords be, was lost in her own thoughts the whole time.

Although she paid very slight attention to her surroundings but she was mostly absent-minded.

Elma started to notice that she was regretting the actions she had taken so far.

—Because of my fault, especially with that Mūzeg...

It was a huge worry that nothing could be done about.

She felt like scolding herself for having created this kind of a situation.

Although, earlier, she was completely absorbed in running away so she didn't have any time to think about things but not that they had some time, those thoughts came back to plague her.

If you think about it, then the reason for Mūzeg to be after them was with herself.

She was the one who got the other Demon Lords... involved.

—Damn it.

It might be true that the other Demon Lords were being pursued by some hostile forces.

The <Alchemy King> Shaw was being chased by the countries of Saisalis and the others should be the same.

The circumstances of the people who gathered there might have been extremely similar.

However, Mūzeg was in a completely different level.

Rather than being pursued by Mūzeg, it might have been better to be pursued by several of the other countries instead.

And the one who brought Mūzeg into this situation, was her.

“Elma, Elma, Let’s go to the basement. Seems we can see a lot of things there!”

“Eh?... A, ah, that’s right...”

Suddenly, an excited^[1] voice interrupted her thoughts.

Merea was standing next to Elma with a cheerful expression on his face.

This was probably what it meant to have a face full of excitement.

It was an easy to understand expression.

“Is something the matter?”

“No, nothing is wrong”

His strange red pupils seemed to pierce through her and for, but a moment, she felt like he may have seen through all the way to her heart.

That was how straight forward his gaze was, with a flash of brightness in it that seemed to be ascertaining something or at least that’s how she felt when she looked into his eyes.

However, seeing him tilt his neck and ask her, made her realise that it was a needless worry.

Feeling slightly relieved, Elma followed after Merea.



Elma’s worry was actually not needless.

Although to a vague level but Merea had an inkling that Elma was blaming herself.

On the mountain top of Lindholm Sacred Mountain, he had seen that kind of an expression quite a few times.

The heroic spirits who had regrets in the past would sometimes make that kind of an expression and Elma’s was quite similar to that.

Over and above that, Merea had noticed Elma’s self-reproach and he also noticed that she didn’t seem to want to talk about it so he decided not to ask her anything.

There was also the reason that, even if he did ask, he didn't really have a decent reply to provide.

He didn't plan on leaving her be but right now, he wasn't sure how to get rid of her worries.

When and how.

Even to the heroic spirits it was hard to ask, so how could he just casually ask that of her when he had only just met her.

How could he get her to express her mind without any fear.

Actually, should she really express her mind at all?

Merea felt slightly annoyed at himself for not being able to decide.



Afterwards, Merea followed Shaw's lead and stepped into the basement of the Sherwood firm's branch office.

"There really are a lot of things, both [animate] and inanimate"

There were various that had been procured from several regions in the basement of the firm's branch office.

Merea gently laid the sleeping Liliu on a soft sofa, in a corner of the basement and started looking around at the items.

Starting with minerals and plants that clearly have a lot of value, to fine arts that don't seem to have a clear price, till tools that was hard to understand why they were even created.

—There are even cages to put living things in.

The term diverse mess would be the perfect way to describe that basement.

Since they had to wait till that middle-aged monocle <Zaido> prepared the transport for them, Shaw also patiently explained about all the products lined up.

For Merea, most were items he had never seen before.

Although he was extremely curious and his curiosity only grew every time he saw the actual items but he still kept thinking back on Elma's anguished expression.

Every now and then he would glance at Elma but as expected, even during Shaw's explanations, she seemed lost in thought.

"Ohh, there's something rare here"

As they were nearing the end of their tour through the warehouse, Shaw suddenly raised a slightly surprised voice.

In front of Shaw, who was looking ahead with an astonished expression, was a cage. The animals which were supposed to be trade goods, at the end of the day, were all safely kept in cages.

They had seen quite a few cages so far but this particular one was considerably bigger than the rest.

Merea approached the cage and followed Shaw's gaze. When he did that, he immediately understood why that cage alone, was considerably larger than the rest.

"...Dragon"

It was similar to that.

Inside that cage was a creature, similar to the <Sky Dragon> Cortista, sitting down heavily.

Compared to Cortista's white body, the dragon inside the cage had a black body instead.

"It's probably an infant Land Dragon (Reirnote)^[1]"

Not a <Sky Dragon (Teishia)> but a <Land Dragon (Reirnote)>.

Now that he was told, he finally realised what felt off about that dragon. The [[wings]] were too small.

Cortista's wings were exceptionally humongous.

To make that huge body fly, the wings were probably required to be that size at least.

However, the land dragon in front of them, its wings were somewhat smaller than its body.

In exchange, its legs were much better developed than Cortista. Clearly to run really well on land.

“Land dragons don’t fly right?”

“That’s right. They don’t fly... They do `[[jump]]` ^[1] though”

Land dragons don’t fly, they do jump though. They leap.

With their overwhelming leg strength and their wings that they use to stabilise their posture, they are able to easily `[[leap]]` through the sky.

On the other hand, it was obvious that they were excellent at running on the ground as well.

Their speed was something that horses could never compete with and it was at the level where they might be considered one of the fastest moving creatures in the world.

Also, their small wings would help them when they would run at those frightening speeds and it could be said that their wings were never for flying but were made for running instead.

“Hmm, where did the buy something like a land dragon, I wonder. It’s not something that you see very often”

Shaw himself didn’t seem like he had a clue.

At that time, the middle-aged monocle, Zaido, returned with ragged breathing.

“Sherwood-sama, the preparations for horses are done. They are swift horses, I have prepared 15 of them in total”

“Is that so. If a few of them ride together, we can somehow make it. Thanks for the hard work.

—By the way, there is something I wanted to ask”

“Yes?”

“That land dragon, where did you buy it?”

“...Ah”

At Shaw’s question, Zaido raised a voice of conviction and then in the next moment, with a “u~n” he raised a troubled groan.

“Actually, a few days ago, at the central commercial district’s auction I saw it. Thinking that if we handled it well, it might sell well but...”

Zaido kept glancing at Shaw’s face as he spoke up as if it was extremely hard to say. Shaw lightly asked Zaido to continue and as if serving a duty, Zaido continued.

“...It was sick. When I purchased it, it was perfectly healthy but it seems to have been a latent sickness. There were no symptoms of sickness... 2 days after we carried it into the basement... Dear me... [we got done in] ”

“I see, there is a need for more diligence huh. Should I hire a biologist?”

“No no, I can’t make the same mistake twice. I’m studying myself now”

“Good, that is exactly why you’re a merchant with Sherwood firm”

Shaw seemed to be lenient with Zaido’s mistake.

After knowing the reason, Shaw turned his gaze back to the land dragon.

“Nevertheless, a sickness huh. Can’t we treat it medically?”

“That’s probably impossible. Even if we say that it’s sick, since it’s a land dragon, a normal human would never be able to cure it. Not to mention that, the disease that this land dragon has contracted, is a <Fatal Draconic Disease> that has no established treatments.

I investigated the fatal draconic disease to see if we could treat it but in turn, I ended up finding out how troublesome it actually was...

I’ve gotten to a point where I’m already giving up. Though I really don’t want to lose such a nice merchandise but...”

That land dragon was indeed limply lying down inside the cave.

Having approached the cage, Aiz looked at the land dragon with sad eyes.

Elma as well, cleared away her absent-mindedness from before and looked at the land dragon with a gloomy gaze.

Seeing the land dragon that was gradually becoming weaker, as if seeing her own future in it, Elma had a really sad expression.

“...Well then, shall we try to cure it?”

However, only the man with white hair said words and showed an expression completely contrary to everyone else there.

“Eh?”

“If there’s no helping it then, at least let me help out in the end”, Merea replied.

“I don’t know if I can cure it or not but, if you’re giving up anyway then won’t you let me have a shot at it?”

Merea’s gaze, like his words, were stupidly honest and straightforward.



What exactly will that man end up doing, everyone thought that as they looked on. At that time, Merea walked over to Marisa and spoke up.

“Could you lend me one of those daggers on your back?”

Marisa tilted her head.

“Do you plan to do something to the land dragon’s body with this blade? You won’t be able to pierce through the land dragon’s body with such a blade though?”

“Ah, that’s not what I need it for. It’s to stab myself with”

“I, now, have an extremely strong urge to not lend it to you...”

Seriously, what exactly was he saying.

Marisa lost her usual cool and with a troubled expression, she frowned.

However, Merea did not lower his hand, he had an expression that said, “quickly,

quickly”.

“...Seriously, such a selfish master...”

Saying so, Marisa seemed to have been worn down.

Although she was confused, her giving into Merea’s request was just like a sweet maid who couldn’t refuse her selfish master’s requests.

Marisa took out one of the daggers from its sheath and handed it over to Merea.

“Just so you know, it’s just a sturdy normal dagger”

“Okay”

He replied somewhat absentmindedly and then he approached the cage the land dragon was in.

“■■■”

Right afterwards, Merea said something.

It was definitely, [something].

What it may have been, was something no one in that place understood.

It wasn’t a language of humans.

With a “Oh!”, the first one who seemed to realise something was Shaw.

“Is that, by any chance, [Dragon Language] ?”

“Hm?... Ah, that’s right. A sky dragon I’m friends with taught me”

“...Wai, wait!! Just hold on!! The very fact that you’ve been taught by a sky dragon is strange to an extreme extent though!!”

Hearing Shaw’s protest that accompanied his impatience, “Just let it slide”, Merea tried appealing that with a fed-up look on his face.

However, Shaw spoke up with a look that said, “That’s something I definitely cannot overlook”.

“However, isn’t dragon language something you need a special organ in your body just to be able to pronounce?”

“That’s right”

“What do you mean, that’s right...?”

“The vocal cords were something... I received from an acquaintance. Among my acquaintances there was an idiot who, wanting to get power, had aimed to become a dragon”

“That is definitely an idiot. Without a doubt, an idiot. A person becoming a dragon... that idea itself is idiotic, there’s no way to become successful...”

“Although his body did not transform into that of a dragon but he did, apparently, succeed in integrating a part of a dragon’s power into his body”

“ ...”

It was extraordinary.

Shaw, despite having a cramped expression, could not form any words.

Marisa had her eyebrows lifted and was, unusually, showing an astonished expression, Aiz, on the other hand, tilted her neck and spoke in a dazed state, “Eh? Ehh? A person become a dragon?... Ehh?!”

“So in that way, I somehow managed to get the vocal cords because of that acquaintance. After that, I basically just had to learn dragon language. I worked hard to learn the language though. It would have been a waste of a treasure if I didn’t learn after all.

Cortista was extremely strict though...”

While speaking in a light manner, Merea smiled bitterly as he remembered the past of that person.

Although what he was saying was something that was not easily believable but in fact, when Merea spoke in the dragon language, the land dragon reacted to him.

“...I’m not really fond of situations where I have no choice but to believe but...”

They still had no choice but to believe in his words.

Chapter 31

The White God and the Black Dragon

“■■■, ■■■”

Merea spoke several dragon language words while facing the land dragon. However, although the land dragon reacted to his speech and opened its mouth, but no sound came out.

“...This guy, can't he speak?”

“The dragon? Maybe it's loss of speech? Or maybe it's too young and hasn't learned to speak yet?”

Shaw inquired while tilting his head to the side.

Merea on the other hand, showed a troubled expression and groaned as a reply to Shaw's question.

“Who knows, I'm not very certain of it myself. If you could understand dragon language through the movement of the mouth, it would have been nice but while speak it, there is hardly any movement of the mouth after all. The [dragon's vocal cords] are usually used to create special sound waves of various lengths and words are made in that way, so if it loses its ability to make any sound itself, it's hard to judge.

...Well, although it seems like loss of speech as far as speaking dragon language goes but it did react to me speaking in dragon language so, it shouldn't be that it doesn't know dragon language at all.

Dragons are extremely smart and learn their language at very young age, it should have properly learnt its words while it was still in its [Pride] ^[1]“

The dragon-kind, due to their high abilities and rarity, are treated as transcendental beings but they aren't really that different from other living beings.

Though their abilities do tower above others, like living beings who have a society, they tend to live in groups.

The sky dragons (Teishia) mostly lived up in the skies and don't really show

themselves on the ground much which lead to them having such a special reputation but, those sky dragons as well, have children and families and lived in small groups, which was a fact that Merea knew well.

This was information he was told about, in quite detail, by his [[friend]], the sky dragon [[Cortista]].

“If that is the case, then maybe the fatal draconic disease may be the case. It might be adversely affecting the internal organ”

“That may be the case. However, if it’s come to this... I guess I have no choice”

Seeing the land dragon raise its head and look right into Merea’s eyes, made him heave a sigh.

The slit-like pupils of the land dragon, maybe due to the fatal draconic disease, looked rather cloudy.

Even then, when Merea looked deep into its eyes, he felt like he saw some of its feelings in there.

For quite a long time after he was born in this world, he had spent a lot of time talking to Cortista, which might have been the reason why Merea could now understand the [[expressions]] in a dragon’s eyes.

“...Hmmm. It’s my own decision but since you can’t speak right now, I’ll have to make a judgement based on just looking at your eyes”

Saying that, Merea quickly entered into the cage.

In the next moment,

“Ohh, Uwaaa!”

A hysteric voice, quite similar to a scream resounded.

The owner of that voice, was the middle aged monocle, Zaido.

He became rather flustered, looking at Merea as if he was looking at an unbelievable scene.

“Th, That’s dangerous!! It may be weak but it’s still a land dragon (Reirnote), you know?!”

So, he screamed.

Although it's young, although it's weak, the other side is still a land dragon.
If it wanted to, it could use its tail to crush any human in one blow.

Since he was with Shaw and was called a Demon Lord so, he definitely was not a normal human being but even then, Zaido couldn't help but get flustered.

"Or more like..."

In the first place, how exactly did he get into a cage that was locked?

The key that fit into that keyhole was something that Zaido had on his person, even then.

Thinking that, when he looked towards the cage, he noticed that the bars seemed to have been forcefully twisted out of shape by something.

As soon as he saw that, "No way, no, but that's just..." Zaido started saying incomprehensible things.

He put a hand on his forehead and felt a cold sweat, in the next moment he looked over at Shaw with an astonished expression.

In response to that, with an easy to understand movement,

"...Like this"

He made a gesture of twisting the bars aside.

Zaido's face twisted into an even more surprised expression, to the point where the rest were worried it may not return back to normal anymore.



Merea, very gently, returned the twisted bars of the cage, back to normal and then he faced towards the land dragon.

Merea, his otherworldly looks with his white hair and red eyes and the land dragon, with its extremely rare black scales.

One man and one dragon, without a sound, faced off against each other. In a way, it seemed to be a rather fantastical situation but in reality, it wasn't such an easygoing situation where something like that could be said.

If someone who didn't know of the ridiculous stuff Merea usually pulled, they would definitely scream and call someone for help.

In reality, Zaido had already raised a hysterical voice and Shaw and the rest were looking on with an astonished expression.

However, since Merea just entered into the cage without a second's thought, the rest ended up with thoughts like, "Seems to be fine huh".

It had reached a point where, as far as Merea was concerned, anything seemed to be possible.

Even then, Zaido alone looked like he was worried for Merea and, looked to have completely lost his cool, with his heart in his throat.

“■■■■, ■■”

As if the other people's reactions had nothing to do with him, Merea looked at the land dragon and, for the last time, spoke in dragon tongue.

However, the land dragon showed a slight reaction but, without even the slightest sound, he just looked at Merea with drowsy eyes.

“What, did you say?”

Aiz suddenly asked Merea.

“Hmm, in short, I asked, 『Do you want to live?』 ”

Since he said, in short, that would mean that, in those few words, quite a lot of meanings were filled up.

Aiz understood that immediately, since she was quite smart.

Although she wanted to know the structure of that mysterious language but, the most important thing right now was,

“So, if left be, it really will die... right?”

That was what was most important.

Aiz gazed at the land dragon with a concerned gaze and a sad expression.

However, the one to respond to her question was not Merea, but it was Zaido.

“As the name suggests, the fatal draconic disease, is a fatal disease. Originally, a land dragon wouldn’t have to be worried about contracting any plague however, there are diseases that only affect dragons. This fatal draconic disease is one of them and... it’s quite the troublesome one too”

“By the way, what is the evidence that this land dragon has actually contracted the fatal draconic disease?”

As soon as he had answered, Merea asked him a question from inside the cage.

“It’s the tongue. A dragon that has contracted the fatal draconic disease would have a cross shaped bruise, known as a death seal, on their tongue. Of course, I couldn’t do something as terrifying as opening its mouth and checking its tongue and after it became weak, it stopped eating food as well so I couldn’t confirm it. However, a few days ago, I noticed that its tongue was hanging out and at that time, and noticed the death seal”

While Zaido was speaking, Merea had already placed his hand on the land dragon’s mouth and had it open its mouth up.

Even Zaido, as if he had already gotten used to the recklessness of Merea, though he did look a little wide-eyed, he kept his calm and instead, asked a question to Merea.

“Was it there?”

“...yeah”

Merea replied with a short nod and immediately returned the land dragon’s mouth back to its original position.

What Merea saw inside its mouth, was a purple colored cross mark. That seemed to be the death seal.

If what Zaido said was true, then it was definitely the fatal draconic disease.

“How quickly does it kill a dragon?”

“In about a week”

“How many days has it been so far?”

“Since it started looking sick, it has been about 4 days”

Since they didn't know accurately when the symptoms started, it might just be a vague estimate.

Generally speaking, the dragon tribe was quite proud so, it may have been stubborn and even after the symptoms started, it may have tried to suppress it and didn't show it till it became too weak.

“I'll ask just in case but, any cure...”

“There is none. Even if there was one, this dragon's parents should have used it already. It's hard to think that those smart dragons wouldn't know anything about a disease that is only contracted by dragons.

In fact, since they are our natural enemies, they must know a lot more than humans do.

However, that dragon tribe had already [[given up]] ”

What Zaido was saying had another fact hidden in it.

Land dragons who usually form groups, not to mention, an infant in that group was captured in here.

An extremely able, a hunter at the level of a Demon Lord, went into a group of land dragons and kidnapped a single infant, is not something that is impossible but the possibility of that being true is extremely low.

Other than a Demon Lord, there really aren't that many idiots who would turn an entire group of land dragons hostile.

If that's the case,

“So that is why this land dragon was, [[kicked out]] of its pride huh?”

“...Yes, that is probably the case. The fatal draconic disease is something the only dragons contract, on the other hand, dragons can spread it to each other very easily”

At Zaido's explanation, everyone there was able to make a guess. The reason why that

land dragon was separated from the others.

It was because the other dragons found out about it having the fatal draconic disease.

All so that, a contagious fatal disease doesn't spread among the other dragons.

Dragons are smart.

It was very easy to imagine a situation where the entire pride would be annihilated if left alone.

All of them looked at the land dragon with a gloomy gaze.

However, immediately, Merea looked at it with a determined gaze and while stroking its body, he once again spoke in dragon tongue.

“■■■”

It was a short sound.

What he had said was something that, other than Merea, no one understood.

Shaw and the others were quite curious at what he had said at that point. But, seeing that tension in Merea's body increase exponentially, they lost their timing to ask him.

However, as soon as Merea finished speaking those short dragon language words, the land dragon, unlike what it had shown so far, had a sharp glint in its eyes and looked over at Merea. For various reasons, they felt their heartbeat quicken.

Marisa had already placed her hand on the cage and was preparing to twist the bars when,

“It's fine”

As if he guessed that, Merea raised one hand and held her back.

Although his gaze did not shift from the land dragon, he probably guessed from the creaking sound that resounded from the cage.

“...It might get a little noisy so it might be better for everyone to go upstairs... Ah, is it fine to be noisy?”

Merea turned towards Shaw as if he was asking for confirmation.

He was asking for permission from Shaw who was the head of this firm.

“As long as you don’t destroy any of the other things, I don’t really mind”

“Got it”

Merea nodded, then,

“In that case, it really would be better if you guys waited upstairs. Liliu is there too, I’d hate to wake her up by being too noisy”

On my hand, Merea’s words seemed to be a request but on the other hand they also seemed to have the force of his will, that he would not take “no” for an answer.

“...hmm, I guess that’s fine. However, please do remember that we don’t have much time. We have, at most 10 minutes. We really can’t wait any longer. I personally would be happy if you would fix one of my merchandise... however, if it lead to you becoming hurt, it would be pointless”

Hearing that, one person had an astonished expression.

It was Zaido.

He looked at Shaw as if he was seeing an unbelievable scene.

Seemingly having noticed that gaze, Shaw looked away from Merea and with a smile on his face, asked,

“...Are you surprised to see me this concerned about something other than money?”

“N, no, well... rather, I was just surprised at Sherwood-sama’s straightforward action that was expressed in your words... that was rare, is what I thought”

While looking at Zaido, who seemed to have a hard time speaking, Shaw showed a cheerful expression.

“That is how large a debt I owe him. I dislike owing anything after all... Ah, also, I have a feeling that he’ll help me earn tons of money. —Ha! If I think of it that way, then he’s not just money for me! Is he a spirit of money?!”

“As my superior and a fellow money-grubber, I really cannot seem to follow your train

of thought”

Although Zaido sighed, his face had a happy expression.

“In any case, that is the case so, that is why I had shown such concern for him. I need to slowly clear away my debt and in time, reach a point where he owes me, after all!”

In the end, when Shaw said that in a rather forced manner, Zaido, once again, smiled with a sigh.

“Let’s... leave it at that then”

“That doesn’t seem to be a very fitting reply though... Well, whatever. Well now, it’s the wish of the spirit of money, so let us all wait upstairs for him”

Saying that, Shaw, along with Zaido, went upstairs.
Right after them, Elma followed.

“Well, I’ll go upstairs first. I’ll take Lilium along with me”

“I’m counting on you”

Saying that, she picked Lilium up from the sofa and carrying her in her arms, she walked up the stairs.

Aiz looked very reluctant as she looked at Merea,

“It’ll be. Fine... right?”

“Yeah”

Hearing Merea’s strong response, as if she resolved herself, Aiz fixed her posture and went after Elma and the others.

In the end, the only one left over was Marisa.

“It would be troubling for me if you die, so I’ll stay back here”

“It’ll get quite noisy you know? This one will probably roar quite a bit”

“Will it also thrash around?”

At the way Merea phrased his sentence, Marisa had an inkling of what might happen.

“...It probably will. Shaw told me not to ruin any of the other merchandise so I plan on keeping it contained inside the cage, somehow”

As expected. The expectation that she really did not want coming true had ended up coming true so she unconsciously frowned.

She then asked him another question, while still frowning.

“If that land dragon’s power was higher than that of Merea-sama’s?”

“That would, probably, hurt a little huh... But, a dragon won’t die that easily so it’s fine. It’s only till the [[medicine]] kicks in”

“...Medicine?”

Although Marisa wanted to reply with a, “I’m not okay with that at all” but, Merea’s face had an extremely resolute expression.

Even if she said, “Please stop”, it didn’t seem like he would listen to her.

That was why, instead of that, in order to get more peace of mind, she asked for more details on what Merea had said.

“Are you in possession of a medicine that works on the fatal draconic disease?”

“Not a medicine that works against the fatal draconic disease. A medicine that works on [[various diseases]] ”

Marisa already had a certain amount of [[trust]] towards Merea’s crazy actions but in the current situation where he didn’t explain much, even at his words, she wasn’t able to believe it much.

What exactly was he planning to do?

She couldn’t make a guess at all.

Suddenly, she noticed that she only had one of her daggers and she remembered that, at Merea's request, she had handed over the other dagger to him.

At that moment, 『it's to stab myself with』, she remembered those words of his and somehow started to understand what Merea was trying to do.

“Is it possibly, Merea-sama's 『blood』?”

“Oh, you figured that out quite well”

Merea looked at Marisa with a smile and said with a complimenting tone of voice.

Marisa's dagger was already in Merea's left hand and it was pointed at a finger on his right hand.

“Well, it's not like my blood is the cure for all diseases. It is just the 『blood that came out of the ring finger』^[2].

...The ring finger of my right hand is called the <Ring Finger of the Medicine King (Carla Nazar)> ”

Marisa had heard that name before.

Footnotes

- ^[1] – A group of dragons can be called a lot of things, weyr, flock, thunder, pride etc. I went with pride because it sounds pretty nice and the dragons on here seem to have extremely high pride~ –
- ^[2] – Ring finger in Japanese is actually called Kusuri Yubi (薬指). The kanji for kusuri, means medicine.

Chapter 32

The Heroic Tales of the Medicine King and her Apocrypha

“<Medicine King> ? As in that Medicine King (Carla Nazar)?”

“You know her?”

“Yeah, she is a character that comes out in an old heroic tale, a success story. In short, she was a hero who, by herself, managed to eradicate an unknown infectious disease”

“Ahh...”

At Marisa’s words, Merea smiled cheerfully. However, that immediately turned into a bitter smile.

“But, the Medicine King (Carla), herself, said that she had [failed] , you know? She definitely got rid of the first disease but she wasn’t able to eradicate the epidemic that assaulted the town after that, she seemed quite frustrated with that fact. [That was why I never ranked up from a title of King] is what she said in a self-mocking way”

“Have you spoken to the Medicine King (Carla)?”

Since Merea spoke so confidently, even while thinking, “impossible”, Marisa promptly questioned him.

The Medicine King (Carla Nazar) in that heroic tale was someone who lived a really long time ago.

No matter how long her life was, it should not be possible to live till now.

Although, having thought till that point, she suddenly had a thought.
As to where her master [had been living till now].

—Lindholm Sacred Mountain

“...No way”

“Well, I’ll tell you the details later. This one seems to be in quite some pain so, let’s do this quickly.

...Though it might be even more painful after this though”

Saying that, Merea once again, turned towards the land dragon.

While looking at his back, Marisa tried to guess what Merea’s [might be even more painful] might mean.



The heroic tales of the <Medicine King> Carla Nazar were, in general, slightly different because of word of mouth and differences between scribes and all those stories had slight differences in them but the fundamental structure was the same.

It was a story of how Carla overcame various struggles and finally, splendidly, eradicated the infectious disease.

However, there were also a few [Apocrypha] ^[1] which told a different story from the heroic tales.

Those apocrypha, unlike the heroic tales of the Medicine King that the people preferred, did not praise the Medicine King but instead ridiculed her.

Especially, there were many descriptions describing the medicine that the Medicine King created to be [defective].

It was certain that the medicine that the Medicine King created was what eradicated the infectious disease but there was also the rumour that, a lot of people died from having consumed her medicine.

It seemed to have been a [hazardous substance].

It was written that, rather than the infectious disease, people with weak bodies instead died because of the medicine provided by the Medicine King.

Due to the rather graphic nature of those texts, it wasn't read much by the general public but, historians on the other hand, treated it as precious research material and seemed to prefer the apocrypha instead.

A heroic image created by people is usually distorted by their own wishes and expectations, due to which, historians regarded the apocrypha, which straightforwardly ridiculed the Medicine King as something very precious.

【■■■】

While Marisa was getting her thoughts about the Medicine King in order, Merea once again, spoke in dragon tongue.

In the next moment, he placed the dagger on his ring finger and quickly slid it down.

A silver flash ran down his finger.

Red blood started flowing from the wound, became small beads and with a small sound, fell down.

After having confirmed that several drops had fallen to the ground, Merea took a step towards the land dragon.

"...I don't know how this is going to end, but, since this one showed a proper reaction to the dragon language words I spoke, so I'll struggle till the end.

If we leave it alone, it'll die. If it can't bear the blood of the Medicine King (Carla) then, it'll die. At least, we should take care of it till the end. Even if it were to die, dying all alone... is just sad"

Merea spoke with a gentle tone.

Suddenly Marisa felt a strong urge to find out what kind of expression Merea was making that time and so she quietly, without making any noise, shifted her position to be able to see his profile.

"I had thought that, if we prepared ourselves for it, then we wouldn't have much of a problem with death. But, when it actually comes time to die... there are quite the few regrets we fill ourselves with though.

In my case, I had Flander with me but, if it goes on like this, then you'd be alone. The fact that we met like this, here, might be some kind of fate. Though, I don't know if I'll

be able to do for you, what Flander did for me... but, if you're going to die, I'll stay by your side"

Merea had a gentle smile on his face.

Marisa felt that his smile, had a strange frailty to it.

"...Marisa"

"!! Y, yes, I'm right here"

Suddenly being called out to, Marisa felt like her heart jumped into her throat.

Maybe because she spent too much time paying attention to the changes in Merea's expression but, she didn't pay proper attention to her surroundings.

She quickly fixed herself and as much as possible, in a tidy manner, she stood waiting for Merea's next words.

"Sorry for being selfish but, if it seems tough with just myself then, would you help out?

For... pinning it down. I said so earlier but, he'll probably rampage"

While laughing in a slightly troubled manner, he asked her... That was his request.

It wasn't really something that a master should have to ask his servant but the reason for that is probably that, even now Merea might be slightly overwhelmed by Marisa's one-sided master-servant pledge.

However, for Marisa, that was the first [request] that Merea had properly made of her and it ended up making her heart beat much faster.

—I can finally be of use to my master.

She felt so happy that she wanted to secretly jump for joy.

"Of course. Until there is life in me, I'll help in any way I can"

"It's not okay to use your life for me though"

Merea, once again, laughed in a slightly troubled manner.

“Anyway, I’ll handle this alone first”

Marisa wanted to, immediately, run over next to Merea but having been told that, she kept her impatience in check.

Leaving Marisa be, Merea finally brought his bleeding ring finger towards the mouth of the land dragon.

From earlier, the land dragon had its tongue hanging out and so, Merea dripped several drops of his blood onto that tongue.

“■■■”

He most probably told it to, [[drink]].

At Merea’s words, the land dragon, as if putting forth a lot of effort, returned its tongue to its mouth.

Its body trembled weakly but it definitely tried to drink that blood.

“Medicine King’s (Carla’s) blood has quite the immediate effect so, if we wait 2 to 3 minutes, some effect should come up. Let’s wait till then”

“As you command”

Marisa kept both her hands clasped in front of her and bowed her head slightly.

“Haha, even at such a time your bow is perfect.

...Ah that’s right, we only have a short while but, what we talked about earlier, do you mind if I hear your version?”

Merea turned back towards Marisa and while laughing slightly, spoke.

“The story of the Medicine King... right?”

“That’s right, Carla’s story. Due to some circumstances, I was able to talk to Carla but, Carla herself thought upon her contributions with self-mockery, so she wouldn’t tell me too deeply about it. Though she did tell me a few things but those might have been distorted with her humbling herself. Which is why, such a story may in fact, have more truth to it”

Hearing the first half of Merea's words, she really wanted to retort but as a servant, she realised that it would be too rude an action.

Her master had said, 『tell me about it』. So her priority would be to fulfill that request.

They didn't have much time either.

Thinking so, Marisa opened her mouth.



When Merea heard Carla's 『heroic tale』 from Marisa, he did not show any particular reaction.

He looked like, what he had heard, was what he had expected.

However, when Marisa spoke about the 『Apocrypha』 to him,

“...I see”

He nodded strongly.

As if he had just understood something.

“Historians are unexpectedly sharp huh. They accurately pointed out Carla's regrets”

“Then that mean, then it actually...”

“Yeah, 『With this blood, I have killed my friend』, is what she said. She also said, 『A lot more died as well』 ”

“ ... ”

Marisa did not know how she should respond.

To Merea, who seemed to be close to Carla, should she say something that amplified Carla's faults. Wouldn't that just end up making him feel bad?

Several thoughts danced around Marisa's head.

But, in the end,

“However, even with that said, Carla's achievements are pretty big”

Marisa said, as if she were giving a follow up to what Carla had done so far.

“Heee?”

Merea asked with body gestures that showed how interested he was. He had a smile full of curiosity on his face, a smile that had no sarcasm in it.

While feeling a kind of beauty in that smile, Marisa immediately replied with the answer she had already prepared.

“One of the biggest contributions of Carla was to shift the research efforts of healing techniques, which till then had been overwhelmingly favoring [wounds] towards that of researching epidemics and diseases.

In every age, research of healing magic was always centered around wounds that the body suffers and the subject of researching diseases and epidemics, which have different causes for each one was avoided quite a bit.

For a long time now, if there are epidemics which are rampant for a long time, they do seem to have medicines which are exclusively developed to cure that disease but, if a new epidemic starts, then they seem to be prepared for at least a few generations of sacrifices”

“Seems to be the case”

Merea nodded.

Marisa continued.

“The medical techniques required to cure epidemics had to be created from scratch for each new one so, healing practitioners, who were known to be excellent in their age, were in a state where they basically gave up.

However, Carla alone, faced off against all those diseases. Carla collected all the medicinal techniques of the ancient and modern ages as well as from every location and over and above that, she added her own research to that and even other than techniques, she used medicinal herbs and with all of that, finally, she came up with an almost omnipotent medicine that worked on almost every disease”

“However, at that point only... right?”

“...Yes”

Carla's medicine was not omnipotent.

At that point it may have been close to being omnipotent.

However, it was not able to combat the epidemic that spread later and that is a fact that has been, undeniably, recorded in history.

"In an age long before Carla, there used to be a [Demon Lord] known as <Medicine Emperor> and, Carla is the one who was said to have gotten the closest to the abilities of that Medicine Emperor"

"A Demon Lord with the title of Emperor? If it was before Carla then that would mean..."

"Yes, it's the so called, genuine Demon Lord who was actually [evil]... No, whether he was genuine or not, is something that is based on the age they lived in so, that way of saying it is rather misleading.

...Anyway, he had participated in quite a lot of conduct that would be considered evil from the general public's point of view"

"What did that Medicine Emperor do?"

"He created the prototype of the healing technique that was known to be the ultimate healing technique, <Omnipotent Technique (Raftere)>... Although he used a large number of sacrifices for that though"

" <Omnipotent Technique (Raftere)>..."

"Even then, the <Omnipotent Technique> of the Medicine Emperor, was in the end, still incomplete.

After all the research was accumulated, since it was the closest to the ideal dream Omnipotent Technique, it was called as <Prototype Omnipotent Technique (Pario Raftere)> "

"Some people come up with really amazing things huh..."

Merea spoke with a shocked expression.

"By the way, the completed form of that omnipotent technique still does not exist right?"

“Yes, it does not exist. That is why, it has been said since long ago that, the person who finally completes the omnipotent technique would be given the title of <Medicine God>.

Since the time that such a thing was decided, not once has anyone managed to attain that title”

“Carla was...”

“Carla achieved her title of Medicine King by creating a multi-drug that could work on various epidemics, as well as further developing the <Prototype Omnipotent Technique (Pario Raftere)> of the Medicine Emperor.

The prototype omnipotent technique of the Medicine Emperor, although omnipotent when it came to wounds, was surprisingly useless when it came to diseases”

Having spoken that far, Merea breathed a sigh of satisfaction.

The reason he stopped the conversation at that point, was probably because he noticed the land dragon, which was still lying down near his feet, slightly swung its tail around.

Marisa is really knowledgeable huh. I’m glad I could listen to Carla’s story... Thank you”

Merea said to Marisa with a truly happy look.

Being complimented and thanked so straightforwardly, Marisa spoke with a red face,

“N, no, I’m grateful”

Looking embarrassed, Marisa looked down. It seemed like she felt too embarrassed to even look Merea in the eyes.

“Well, since that is how Carla’s blood is, I’m not entirely sure if it will work on the dragon”

“Medicines that humans make are generally only targeted towards diseases that humans are bound to get.

“Yup. The sky dragon who taught me dragon tongue once said, rather unreasonably, to Carla, 『Make a medical technique that will work on dragons now』. However, Carla

came back with, 『Don't be stupid, I'm not even able to save humans properly and you think I'm capable of saving dragons?!』 and was extremely angry after”

“S, sounds like a rather violent scene...”

“Pretty much. Also, the guy who gave me the dragon's vocal cords joined in with, 『Carla! Dragons are amazing! Let's save them!』 and tried to help out the sky dragon in that conversation. He was quite the idiot so his follow-up was fatally lacking in words though”

“By the way, what was Carla's reply to that?”

“...『I no longer have a physical body, ask Merea instead. I have never tried the medicine on a dragon, but the fundamental medicinal effect of reacting to a plague is widely accepted, so it may just be effective』, she said... and ended up completely dumping it onto me”

Marisa no longer knew what exactly he was talking about, but seeing Merea shrug his shoulders, she found it slightly funny. So she covered her mouth and quietly laughed. Noticing that, Merea laughed as well.

“Ahh, sorry, you probably have no clue what I'm on about huh. I'll explain it all properly in time”, he said.

While Marisa was feeling slightly happy at his words, finally, the land dragon near Merea's feet stirred.



Marisa immediately put up her guard.

If Carla's blood really is highly toxic, then the land dragon will, without a doubt, rampage.

Pain often acts to remove the limiter on the power of living beings.

It could be the body's rage stemming from its fundamental urge to live or it could be a 『death dance』 that uses up and burns away the last of a creature's life.

Anyhow, the land dragon will definitely rampage.

Merea had already indicated at that and Marisa did not doubt him at all.

That was why, no matter what happened next, she had to first ensure Merea's safety. Marisa, once again, resolved herself.

And then,

“...!!!”

That came.

It was a roar that felt like it would pierce the ground and cause an earthquake.

Footnotes

- ^[1] – Apocrypha or Apocryphal texts are basically texts are widely circulated but are of doubtful authenticity or origin.

Chapter 33

The Monster was Laughing

It was an intense roar that made you feel like it would crush your heart just from the sound alone, as if being urged on by instincts.

In the lounge, upstairs in the Sherwood firm, after hearing that roar, Aiz unconsciously took two steps back and as if that wasn't enough, she wrapped her arms around her body and crouched down.

"U, uwaa..."

The first roar was the most intense.

After that, as if it were being obstructed by something, there were intermittent voices that came up and also, there were sounds of something hard being hit hard which would weakly resound.

Since they were able to hear the sounds this clearly even though it was from the underground, it went to show just how loud the actual sounds were.

Elma hugged Aiz from the side and thanks to that, Aiz finally managed to calmed down a little and was able to hear Shaw's sigh.

"...Haa"

With a fed up look, Shaw shrugged, no, rather than shrugging, it looked like he dropped his shoulders and then he continued speaking.

"That, just now, definitely resounded right?... Definitely resounded"

While asking by himself, he chimed in with his own reply, which looked rather funny.

"Well, the pursuers from Mūzeg probably haven't found their way here yet, and you usually wouldn't think that, this kind of roar would have anything to do with us Demon Lords..."

However, I still wanted to avoid standing out much..."

The reason they didn't get close to the first town was so that, although a little, they could give themselves some leeway.

That was also the reason why they didn't spend more than an hour after coming to this <Duchy of Neuce Gauss>.

If it wasn't for that, they would have definitely been much more flustered and tried to quickly get past the eastern gate while being worried about being found out.

That being said, they definitely did not consider this as time wasted.

That plan to meet up at the eastern gate in one hour was quite the tight schedule but they had already completed their job of arranging transport quite well.

After having completed that, the 10 minutes they had left before meeting up with the other Demon Lords was a valuable rest period for them.

That's right, a mere 10 minutes.

...However,

"It's quite the reckless thing to do, trying to heal an ailing dragon in under 10 minutes"

Shaw heaved another sigh.

Even Shaw knew that Merea did not fit into the normal standards but, since he was, once again, trying to do something out of the ordinary, he no longer knew how to handle it.

"Seriously though, what do you need to do to make that weak a land dragon to raise this loud a roar?"

The floor of the firm was shaking with a slight crashing sound while the walls were creaking loudly.

Just what kind of magic did he use?

Shaw had not heard anything about a medical technique being discovered that would work on the fatal draconic disease so, most probably, he might really be using an unreasonable [[magic]] instead.

"Just in case, I'll once more but, a medical technique that would work on the fatal

draconic disease hasn't been discovered yet right?"

Shaw asked Zaido, trying to confirm what he already knew.

"Yes, first of all, samples are just not enough. Only dragons can contract this disease after all. Being able to encounter a patient before it died of fatal draconic disease—Calling it a patient just doesn't sit right—could be considered to be a rather lucky situation. Since one a dragon dies of fatal draconic disease, it doesn't leave much of a trace behind, or so it's said.

Also, another reason why it's really difficult to find a medical technique that would work is because, the root bacterium goes through a troublesome denaturation from generation to generation"

"I'm extremely glad that this disease does not affect humans"

—If that is the case, then it is probably magic after all. No, it could also be sorcery. Half jokingly and half seriously, Shaw thought.

In any case, if it was writhing that violently then it was probably not a medical technique that had to minutely calculate matters.

He might have used a toxic substance or possibly used shock treatment, there was the possibility that he aimed for such a method that aimed at a remedy through the mind.

"...well, fine... Another five minutes. If Merea doesn't return after 5 minutes, while I don't want to see it, I'll once again go downstairs and call them back.

Also, the horses wouldn't have run away right?"

"They would not have. In the first place, if 15 horses walked through town, it would definitely stand out. So, I had them sent to the east gate directly"

"Very good", Shaw said with satisfaction.

Afterwards, for several minutes, the Sherwood firm's building experienced the aftereffects of the shaking.

Gradually, very gradually, the shaking and the roars quieted down and they all waited for Merea and Marisa to come back upstairs.



Merea and Marisa walked back upstairs, roughly 4 minutes after the first roar was heard.

After Shaw finished speaking, the shaking and sounds gradually reduced and finally it fell silent.

Merea, who had just climbed up the stairs, had countless cuts on his face, arms and almost every other part of his body.

Over and above that, even his clothes were ripped in several places.

Marisa as well, unusually, had her clothes in disarray, however, by the time she reached up the stairs and turned towards them, she had already put her clothes back in order.

The first one to notice the strange amount of damage on the body of Merea, who was walking next to Marisa, was Aiz and she immediately ran over to him.

“Ar, are you okay...!?”

Even while she got her tongue all tangled, she asked concernedly.

Her face was colored with impatience and the fist she had clenched was shaking.

Seeing Aiz like that, Merea showed her a smile and to make her calm down, he spoke up.

“Yeah, I’m fine I’m fine, I just had to duke it out a little with the land dragon”

“If a normal human duked it out with a land dragon then it would, in a very easy to understand, and to an extreme sense of that word, definitely mean 『death』 , you know? That doesn’t become a testimony to your being fine, right?”

The one to speak up to Merea next, was Shaw who shrugged his shoulders.

Merea looked towards him and in the same way, smiled.

“That land dragon, in time, it should heal. Well, I saved it out of my own selfishness so I don’t plan on giving any opinions on how it is treated after this”

It should heal.

Hearing those words, Shaw was once again, amazed.

He really did not think that Merea would be capable of cure the fatal draconic disease. As a matter of fact, over 70 percent of people would have personally taken it upon themselves to offer it its final [[peace of mind]] in order for the dragon to not suffer any longer.

“Being told that, do you really think we can do everything as we please now?”

Shaw heaved another sigh.

“Recently, you have been intervening with my standard money principles you know? Not to mention, while having me create debts left, right and center”

“Haha, that wasn’t my intention though”

“Even if you’re like that, I mind it quite a bit though? Since I have a standard money principle, I’m quite particular when it comes to lending and borrowing”

That was what Shaw truly felt.

Shaw himself knew that, he was a shrewd and cunning person but, even then, if he had borrowed or lent to the level that he couldn’t ignore, then it led him to feel rather nervous.

[[I dislike owing someone]] , those words from Shaw were actually words that accurately expressed his personality.

He was that persistent with [[deals]] that used money because he couldn’t shirk on paying back a large debt.

If he couldn’t shirk on paying back a large debt, then he shouldn’t create such a debt in the first place.

However, this Merea alone, had kept having him create debts.

A healthy land dragon, the price of it as a merchandise, would probably be astounding. The value of the land dragon, which had been at rock bottom due to the fatal draconic disease, had, in a mere 10 minutes, skyrocketed.

It would end up bringing an enormous amount of profit to the Sherwood association.

“...Another debt”, Shaw said quietly.

He slightly hated himself for lightly saying, “Fine, go ahead” to Merea’s suggestion.

His understanding towards Merea, was insufficient.

He had thought of Merea to be a combat-oriented [demon] but he turned out to be an even bigger monster than he had first thought. A humongous monster who had dabbled in a wide array of matters.

He had no idea what had been done to that land dragon but, from that point forward, it would be better not to use standard common sense with him.

Ever since the encounter with Mūzeg’s army, he had told himself that multiple times but his guard against Merea’s nonsense was completely shattered from an unexpected source.

“...This is troubling”

Shaw said that in a very soft voice, such that only he would be able to hear it. Though, he had to admit that, his tone of voice had some excitement mixed in it as well.

Shaw, once again, turned his attention towards Merea.

The wounds on his face and body, had already disappeared.

When he had wiped his face, the wounds had already disappeared.

Although they weren’t deep wounds, they healed a little too fast.

However, Shaw did not get surprised at that speed.

In exchange, he wondered if the clothes that had been ripped would fix themselves or not.

He then walked over to one of the walls of the firm and picking up a slightly expensive native clothes of some region’s people, he threw it over to Merea.

“Change into that” was what he motioned with his eyes, looking at Merea who had caught those clothes.

Merea, noticing that intention, slowly started taking his clothes off, at that place.

“So, is it about time now?”

Embarrassedly asking, “How do you wear this...?” he held up the unfamiliar clothing and with Marisa’s help he somehow managed to wear the clothes before he turned to Shaw and asked.

“Yeah, if we run, then we should be able to make it to the east gate, 2 or 3 minutes before the deadline”

“Then, shall we go?”

As soon as he heard Shaw’s reply, Merea went over to Elma and took Lilium from her and once again, carried her on his back.

Looking at her sleeping face from the side, he spoke,

“...haha, even with that roar she didn’t wake up, Lilium really has guts huh”

While laughing happily, Merea headed towards the exit of the Sherwood firm. After Merea, Elma, Aiz and Marisa followed after him, in that order and finally Shaw,

“...Haaa... This is no good. Recently I feel like I’ve been sighing too much...”

“You have my sympathies, Sherwood-sama”

Zaido, also seemingly having understood the abnormality that was Merea, turned a pitying gaze towards Shaw.

As merchants, for them 『things that do not stick to expectations』 are not something that they particularly like.

During large commerce deals, they predict what other merchants would do and accordingly transport goods to the places they decide on but on the other hand, when those predictions are off, they end up making a large loss.

Which was why, they did not like elements they could not predict.

Having understood that is why he looked at Shaw with pity.

“Well, the fact that he can’t be predicted by anyone would also lead to large amounts of profit though”

Reading between his lines, “that sort of thing is also not bad”, was he seemed to be trying to tell himself. He waved towards Zaido and started walking after Merea and the rest.

“I’ll leave the judgement of the merchandise to you as usual. Pursuers from Mūzeg and other countries may come here, in that case...”

“I’m well aware of what to do. I have a [[debt]] with Sherwood-sama that I could never repay. Even if I were to die, I will not say a word”

“That makes me rather happy but, to a moderate degree, make sure to watch out for yourself. If you die, you won’t be able to earn any more money after all”

Saying that, Shaw walked out of the exit and disappeared.

“Those people were like a storm huh...”

Saying that, Zaido fixed the position of his monocle and while shrugging, “Well, certainly, sometimes, that kind of thing isn’t all bad”

He seemed to be rather happy.

【ACT 3】

PREMONITION OF UPHEAVAL

Chapter 34

The Three Countries in Between

In between Mūzeg, which was located in the center of the eastern continent, and Lemuse, which was located further south of that, were three kingdoms known as <The Three Kingdoms>.

From the west, in order they were, <Kingdom of Kushana> , <Kingdom of Zuria> , <Kingdom of Filarfia>.

While they were adjoining the powerful country of Mūzeg, they were rare countries that had banded together to form the <Alliance of Three Kings> and were warding off any invasions by Mūzeg with help from each other.

However, Mūzeg which had recently stretched its evil hands to the west and the north, absorbing any and all countries in the way, had begun to pressure them.

Since Mūzeg's attention was still in the north and west, they weren't too serious with their invasion yet and thus, they were able to get some amount of peace but it was rather obvious that it was only a matter of time before that peace would end.

The Alliance of Three Kings was a strong alliance.

Also, all three countries, although not as lacking in principles as Mūzeg but, were earnest in gathering strength in order to protect themselves.

The previous kings of all the three countries died as if they had been plotted against and in a five year period, all the countries were succeeded by new, young kings who were much more inclined to gather strength in any way possible.

With those three countries, Lemuse more or less had a non-aggression treaty.

It was more or less, since it was rather pointless to even have that non-aggression treaty.

In the first place, due to the foolishness of the King of Lemuse, even if they did nothing, the country would soon fall. In such a situation, they found it pointless to even

consider using their precious military strength against such a country.

The three countries had already formed a treaty for the distribution of the land owned by Lemuse, once the country destroys itself.

Lemuse itself was a declining country, however, the land and resources in the country itself did have some value.

When compared to Mūzeg, it was a rather insignificant amount but, the three countries which felt like clinging to straws definitely could not ignore that land.

There was no need to specifically use up their military strength for this purpose but they felt they definitely should obtain it. Even if they let it be, it will fall to ruin itself anyway. They made sure they were at least prepared to seize the lands once the country falls.

That was the perception of the three countries.

By the way, when the king of Lemuse applied for the non-aggression treaty, he wrote, [We have recently discovered a rich mine under Lemuse. We shall send over rare ores from our side so please take that into consideration and grant the non-aggression treaty]

—Or so, he had exposed in the letter.

He was definitely an idiot.

Who shows all their cards from the beginning.

[What will you give us in order to consider the non-aggression treaty?] , before that could be asked, he himself gave an unguarded answer.

The young kings of the three countries received that letter while either laughing or smiling wryly.

What the king of Lemuse had proposed was not a deal but rather [servitude].

What the king of Lemuse was doing was not a political negotiation between countries but rather the weak begging for something from the strong and entering into servitude.

That person didn't even have a shred of dignity as the king of a country.

The current Lemuse definitely did not have the power to go against the three countries.

However, those young kings knew about the noble Lemuse of old.

Which is why, they couldn't help but ridicule the current king of Lemuse with quite a bit of irritation mixed in.

『Where did that idiotic Lemuse, that tried to save the Demon Lords by itself, go off to?』

The terrible incidents that took place at the turning point of the era, when Demon Lord hunting had started to prosper.

During that time, the only one who raised their voice and said, 『That is just wrong!』 was the idiotic Lemuse.

Lemuse was definitely idiotic but,

『... it was noble』

Even though everyone thought it to be odd but it faced off against extremely powerful enemies without cowering at all.

It was against Mūzeg which hadn't grown as powerful as it was now.

However, even then, Mūzeg was still very powerful.

At that time, the three countries were weak countries that could do nothing but shrink back in the face of the contention between Mūzeg and Lemuse.

The confrontation between Mūzeg and Lemuse did not result in a war but, the series of events that led to the death of the <Technique God Flander Crow> led to two heroes leaving this world.

In the face of that event, the public opinion of the other countries were divided into those which agreed with Mūzeg's Demon Lord hunting and those which were against it.

However the torrential flow of the era was cruel to the weak.

So, now that the era has progressed thus far, no matter where you look, you'll only find countries in 『agreement』.

Lemuse was already in decline because of their foolish king, so the only ones left over are,

『We, the three kingdoms huh』

In the eastern continent, out of all the countries surrounding Mūzeg who were still able to compete against Mūzeg were only the three countries.

However, in reality, even those three countries were,

『In the end, even we ended up desiring the power of Demon Lords so we're not really that different from Mūzeg huh』

They had already dirtied their hands.

In order to resist Mūzeg's tyranny, they needed power no matter what.

They no longer had any qualifications to find fault with Mūzeg.

However, the reason they continued to resist Mūzeg was because, as atonement for having dirtied their hands with Demon Lord hunting, they wanted to at least protect the rural small countries.

『Above everything else, we cannot allow any more Demon Lords to be hunted. Since we have ourselves made that mistake... we know the sadness it accompanies』

The current era was far more chaotic than anyone could ever imagine.

Compared to Mūzeg, which was very obviously brandishing its power and shedding a large amount of blood, the three countries which were trying to bury the rotten flesh that kept leaking out may just be the more troublesome of the two.



On that day, in the royal residence of one of the three countries, the country that specialized in the machinery industry, <The Kingdom of Kushana> , the shadows of two people could be seen.

One of them was the current king of the Kingdom of Kushana, <Muran Kiel Kushana>. The other one was, same as the earlier person, the current king of one of the three countries, <The Kingdom of Filarfia> , <Fasalis Filarfia>.

His country boasted an extremely powerful cavalry.

With an easygoing air, his long hair tied at the back and a slim figure was the King of Kushana, Muran and next to him with a solemn air, short hair and a heavy build was the King of Filarfia, Fasalis.

The two were talking while walking through the corridor of the royal residence of Kushana.

“...Hey, Fasalis. What do you think about it?”

“Think about what? You always say a few words too few”

“We have a close relationship don’t we~ Fasalis... Don’t you get it?”

“...”

Fasalis had a sharp gaze that could make someone feel like they were shot, however, to Muran who had a carefree smile on his face, he turned a friendly gaze towards him.

Fasalis thought on Muran’s question for a little while with a grunt that sounded like it should come out of a beast.

Finally, he understood what Muran was trying to ask and spoke up.

“Do you mean, about the path the three kingdoms should take from now on?”

“Oooh, you got it right. Even though I didn’t really think too deeply on that”

“Oi!”

Muran looked at Fasalis when he raised a reproachful voice, laughed like he was teasing him and put both his behind his head and walked unsteadily down the corridor.

“...It’s probably going to get rather tough from now on. I went over to take a look at how Mūzeg is doing recently, I made sure to disguise myself so they wouldn’t know who I was. When I observed them, I unexpectedly saw <Serius Brad Mūzeg> over there”

“That genius?”

“Yeah yeah, that one... Though seriously, that one is totally impossible. Even though I trained myself quite a bit before I became a king but, even then I ended up thinking that it was impossible... Actually, I might have thought it was impossible because I

trained myself that well.

Anyway, I don't want to stand in the frontlines if possible. I really couldn't think of him as a normal human being"

"In that case, it's impossible for me too huh"

"Well, Fasalis probably wouldn't die though... Anyway, we're kings now. Our bodies have dulled down quite a bit compared to when we were attending Aios Academy though"

"That's true"

Muran stopped in front of a certain room and turning towards Fasalis who was walking up from behind him, gave an exaggerated bow and spoke up.

"Here we are, King of Filarfia. This is the conference room"

"Stop that, you're a king too"

"Don't get so angry~. There's a wrinkle in your brow now"

A room in the royal residence.

The room that was called the conference room was actually Muran's personal room. In other words, it was the room of the king of Kushana.

Muran followed Fasalis into the room and after passing a seat to Fasalis, he sat in his own desk chair as well.

Since the sunlight coming into the room was annoying, he closed the curtains.

"No good, Fasalis, do you remember?"

"Remember what now?"

"That guy, that guy"

As usual, he spoke with a few words too few causing Fasalis to groan while taking off his large cloak.

The groan that escaped from Fasalis was exactly like that of a beast.

“His groan sure is scary~”, while thinking that, Muran gave a shrill laugh and waited for Fasalis to answer his question.

“...Ah, that <Kudo> huh?”

“Oooh you got it right~. I didn’t really prepare for an answer so now that you’ve said it, I have a, [[oh that’s right]] sort of feeling”

“Oi”

It was the usual retort, however, Fasalis knew that his answer had matched with what Muran was trying to say so he could do nothing but sigh.

“Which great household do you think he was from?”

“He probably wasn’t from a great household right? That was why he was thrown out of the school partway right? Even though he was taking those lectures so brazenly, he wasn’t even a student of the school you know?... he had a scary level of impudence and was a genius strategist too”

“Kudo was the one who managed to beat that Serious Brad Mūzeg in a board game after all”

“...yeah”

Aios academy was the best academic institution on the continent.

It was an institute that had many excellent students gather from all over the continent, Muran and Fasalis had attended that academy as well.

The academy, which practiced a policy of excluding any political circumstances of the students, had many members of royal families attending.

It was because they could get an extremely high level of education, while ignoring such social differences.

“Those who have a strong desire to reveal their identity usually keep their family’s name as their alias and would strut around proudly but, <Kudo> and <Brad> were really hard to understand on that point”

That said, people from royal families would have a hard time once they have raised

their fame as royalty so, fundamentally, they would be enrolled into the academy before they started acting like royalty.

Over and above that, it was a custom for people like that to use an alias when they attend school.

“Brad is a rather common name after all. Kudo is a slightly strange name but at least, it doesn’t make you think of a particular country. Since he was thrown out of school like that, he might formally not have been part of a royal family”

As part of their education for gifted people, before they joined the political scene, Muran and Fasalis had enrolled into the school for a few months. However, that is something that applied even to the prince of the Kingdom of Mūzeg, <Serius Brad Mūzeg>.

In the end, Muran and Fasalis did not become close friends with him but seeing that there was an exceptional student, their curiosity got the better of them and they approached Serius.

“After we found out about his real identity, I was seriously scared you know... Something like, isn’t he pretty much an enemy”

“It was something that happened because it was the Aios academy. I think it was rather miraculous that we ended up in the same batch in that short stay”

“Damn it~, If this was the case, I should have at least punched that handsome face at least once”

“It probably wouldn’t scratch him anyway”

“Oh shut up”

“Well, isn’t it fine either way? It was a fine competition on the face of it. You, in your own way, were rather popular with the ladies right?... You can’t compete with him when it comes to power so just bear with that fact for now”

“Da, damn it...!”

Muran puffed up his cheeks like a child causing Fasalis to laugh lightly.

“...Anyway, let’s get back on topic”

“...yeah”

Fasalis fixed his collar while Muran regained his easy-going air and sat back down in the chair.

“If Mūzeg, which is concentrating on the north and west were to face us with their entire military might, do you think we would be able to handle it?”

“...That’d be impossible. I wouldn’t say that there is no way at all but, we’d be pressed for numbers though”

“What about that [Magic Cannon] that you had ordered to have developed?”

“The weapon itself is finished but the magic stones that would become the fuel for it aren’t sufficient. The magic stone deposits in my territory were much less than what I had assumed. This was my mistake... I’m at the point where I’ve even considered crushing Lemuse and stealing their magic stone deposits”

“If we crush Lemuse then we would lose our reason to fight against Mūzeg though”

“...That’s true”

Muran and Fasalis were standing a certain [border].

In the past, they had seriously stood against Mūzeg’s appointment of Demon Lords and Demon Lord hunting. That was because, they saw the level of sincerity that humans should aim for in the actions of Lemuse.

After that time, Lemuse had started to steadily decline but it still managed to hold on quite well. However, right now, that was all about to be brought down by that foolish king.

The three countries, like with Lemuse, were coming close to the point of decline and were mentally starting to yield to Mūzeg.

Maybe there isn’t any need to resist Mūzeg anymore.

Over and above everything, they had already done the same atrocious things as Mūzeg

had done.

Rather than living on with that contradiction, they might as well just hold onto the unity between the three countries and just form an alliance with Mūzeg instead.

Their pride would shatter.

However, they would get a sense of peace.

If sincerity doesn't exist then wouldn't it be fine to just fill the world with irony?

"...Damn it, we were too young weren't we?"

"Are you regretting it?"

"No, at the very least, I don't regret having become king. Even now, I feel that I have been able to contribute quite a bit for the sake of the country, definitely more than my father ever did... Just, Mūzeg is growing larger at a much faster pace than we are, it's rather difficult to grasp anymore"

"That might be so"

A silence permeated around them that made it hard to speak further.

"...this time. Let's decide it with this time. The path that we people take. It is also the job of the king to worry about the citizens of the country.

The pride of the country, the nobleness of the citizens, something like being the guiding principle for that... though that is all assuming we actually survive"

"An age of war makes such inconsistencies seem rather common though"

"It's a horrible era... Though we have no right to say something like that"

"Yeah, that's true... In that case at the next <Summit of Three Kings> should we add in Zuria's princess and decide on some policies?"

"Oi, Fasalis, if you called her a princess now, she'd definitely get pissed off right?"

"I know, I won't actually say it in front of her"

Fasalis once again, laughed lightly.

As he finished laughing, Fasalís looked towards the window with a look of nostalgia.

“If, like those days in that academy, if <Kudo> was here... do you think he would have come up with a better path for us?”

“...those were fun days huh”

“...yeah”

Muran as well, looked out of the window at the sky. It seemed like both of them were seeing the same scenes passing before their eyes.

Chapter 35

A Step of The Mad King

“Hasim-sama, the date and time of the next Summit of Three Kings has become clear”

“By the way, which country was the information leaked from?”

“The Kingdom of Zuria”

“...Seriously, Crisca has always been naive when it comes to such things”

Hasim was receiving the reports from Aisha. Reports related to the next <Summit of Three Kings>.

Hasim had the plan to intervene in the next summit of the alliance of the three countries.

“Well anyway, other things seem to be going well so, I guess I’ll leave out the scolding for now.

...Besides, in this situation, that one is basically a small fry”

In the past, Hasim had [[trespassed]] into Aios Academy.

Different from the first and second princes who were his brothers, he was not loved by his father. Rather, he was hated instead, of course his father would not allow him to attend Aios Academy.

Which is why he trespassed.

With a nonchalant look, he took the lectures there.

He piled up strategies to make sure he wouldn’t be found out by the first and second princes, always kept an eye out but Hasim definitely had the courage and the skill to pull that all off.

In the end he was found and thrown out but having been able to pull that off for several months, showed that Hasim had infiltration abilities that would put your run-of-the-mill spies to shame.

For Hasim, those few months before he was caught was an irreplaceable period.

In those months, Hasim had made many friends.

Among those, there were three individuals who he was particularly close to.

With long hair tied up and a slim body, with an easygoing air around him was a man with gentle features.

With a large clumsy body, however with a very gentle and calm gaze was a large man.

Lastly, a woman with such a beautiful appearance, albeit cold personality, that she was praised as having beauty comparable to the moon.

Always wrapped in dark blue, with that she looked like a beautiful woman that came with [thorns] which she didn't even bother to hide, such a beautiful woman.

It was only later that he learnt that those three were the heirs to the three kingdoms.

Aios Academy was a place that put maximum importance on academics and made sure to keep dangerous topics like political conspiracies at bay.

For that sake, like a masquerade ball, it was a rule to hide one's name or position.

Which is why it was a coincidence that Hasim became friends with those people but it is also possible that the reason they were all able to get along so well was because, since their homes were neighbouring countries, their cultures and customs were similar so they had a lot of common grounds to bond with.

However, unlike those people, Hasim was not the heir.

Even still, when he later found out that the three had set up the summit of three kings as if to fix this era, he was secretly delighted.

And then, those three, after their summit of three kings set right their countries which till then had slowly been moving towards subordination to Mūzeg and once again brought them to the noble pride that Lemuse once had. When he heard that proclamation by those three, he felt an even stronger patriotic urge.

He had heard such a talk from them during his time in the academy as well but, since they all had fake identities, whether it was the one talking or the one listening, it was not easy to know whether it was serious or not. It was a rule of sorts, talk in such a

way that it was hard to tell whether it was seriousness or jokes.

However, Hasim was sure at that point.

—They are serious.

At the same time, he felt like saying, “You did well”.

However, he couldn’t say it.

He wasn’t in any position to say it.

He had finally resolved himself to a coup d’etat but in the beginning, like the protest from earlier, he thought he would be able to convince his father, the king of Lemuse with just words.

Although he did not regret his actions from that time but, when he thinks of the backs of those three who took actions so much faster, he did honestly feel that he had taken too much time to reach this point.

“Is it fine for that father of yours... well, to leave him be like that?”

“Yeah, it’s fine. In fact, let’s have him swim around more”

He was suddenly spoken to by Aisha which abruptly brought him back to the current situation.

“It might actually be useful that father is clearly a foolish king no matter who looks at him. I don’t think there are any other kings who are nearly as foolish as him to the point that he would stun anyone. If that much is seen through, then we wouldn’t even be doubted”

The fact that the king of Lemuse, his father, wanted to serve under Mūzeg might even work to help trip Mūzeg up.

At first he had a “I need to do this immediately” sort of feeling but, in the end, he desisted.

His calm self kept whispering to make use of this situation.

“I’ll use my father to hide my actions. We should do everything that we can while we’re

hidden like this. Intruding on the summit of three kings is one of those actions. Until we start taking action, as much as possible we should not get noticed. Either from the inside or from the outside.
...Especially from the inside, if they find out that I am taking action, there would be serious repercussions”

With his saliva flying, he smiled bitterly as he thought about his father and brothers who continued to slander him at all times.

“Well, that’s the case so, whether the inside or the outside we have to extremely when it comes to concealment or spying”

“Please leave it to me. Like the darkness we will make sure to get Hasim-sama into the place of the summit without fail”

Aisha bowed down elegantly next to Hasim.

Seeing that, Hasim thought, [How beautiful] and then deliberately spoke up in a sarcastic tone.

“It’s like I’m an object huh”

“Please put up with it”

“I get it”

Hasim couldn’t help but smile bitterly once more and waved a hand towards Aisha.



“Oh and also, tell Reynald and the rest to hurry up with the excavation of that mineral deposit. We might be able to use the magic stones excavated from that magic stone deposit for something.

No, in all probability, we will use it.

If we look at the actions of the country with the most developed machinery industry, Kushana, it is rather obvious that Muran is definitely doing something. Most probably something related to magic stones”

“Magic stones, is it?”

“That’s right. I received a report that the peddlers frequenting the Kingdom of Kushana were biased towards carrying magic stones. The observational might of Marchioness Myure is rather phenomenal”

Magic stone, as the name suggests, is a stone filled with mana.
It has its own source of mana.

Fundamentally, a source of mana is something that only living beings generally have, however, a magic stone is unusual in that even though it is a mineral it has the ability to contain mana.

When we talk about ores or the ground, it’s easy to think about mana gushing through it from underground ground veins but as it comes under the category of an ore, it is a rather commendable that it is capable of containing mana.

However, this fact was something that people who used mana as their source of power were extremely thankful for.

Difference in the source of mana could end up creating a difference in the performance of techniques and not to mention, the nature of the source has to match the technique or else it would not even invoke.

That was why, a majority of the people who had a use for a mana source would choose a magic stone over any other ore that came under the category of ores that could contain mana.

“I have received your message for Earl Reynald”

“Yeah”

After Hasim nodded, Aisha paused for a moment before slightly opening her mouth again.

However, without saying anything she closed it.

It seemed like she was troubled over whether she should speak up or not.

“What happened Aisha? Tell me what it is”

However, Hasim did not miss that action.

Now that it had reached this point, Aisha had no choice but to speak up.

She resolved herself and spoke the words she had been worried about saying.

“—Recently, there seem to be some subordinates of your father who have been complaining in a roundabout way. It may be that they have already sensed that something is happening”

Aisha did not want to increase Hasim’s anxiety with such speculation since she did not have proof to back it.

On one hand, there was no way to know whether or not that speculation could become a major issue in the future.

As a [maid] she wanted to keep quiet for her master’s sake.

As a [spy] she wanted to properly report for her master’s sake.

Aisha was excellent on both fronts which is what was causing her worry.

“How much do they know already, is that it?”

“Yes. —What orders should I pass onto Earl Reynald?”

“That’s right... , if they are too persistent then it is fine to take action. Well, their detection of us should be delayed as much as possible though. —We have to get rid of all the flies that gather around with only their interests in mind though”

Aisha did not miss the fact that Hasim had a cruel expression on his face. That expression was only for a moment before it immediately disappeared.

“If we talk about my father, unless it is right in front of his face, he wouldn’t even notice. Even if he did notice, he wouldn’t try to do anything about it since it would seem like a frightening prospect. That’s why, the ones we need to worry about are the people around him”

Since he had been with his father for such a long time, he was able to firmly state what actions his father would take.

It is a possibility that his father would take some large actions but if he did, he wouldn’t take any decent actions.

However,

“...it'd be troublesome if information is leaked outside the country huh... Alright, if there are any who make such movements, let me know. I won't kill them but, at the very least I'll have them tied up somewhere”

Hasim spoke with a serious expression but it soon turned into a more relaxed one.

“—well, even if they find out now, Mūzeg probably wouldn't really care. A mere few magic stones aren't nearly enough to make Mūzeg come steal it from Lemuse”

Mūzeg would not care much for Lemuse. This was something that Hasim was convinced about.

From the start, it's a country that Mūzeg wouldn't gain much from having conquered so it seems like they're going out of their way to keep them alive.

If they completely took over Lemuse then they would have to send some talented or capable person over.

Hasim had already predicted that Mūzeg's king would find that alone to be too troublesome to do.

Even for Mūzeg, talented military officers aren't freely available.

If that is the case, since they can take it anytime they want, they might as well avoid breaking the wills of the citizens and have them search for any and all benefits that the country may have and then take it when they have the time and energy to do so.

“...that's probably how it would play out”

However, he couldn't be completely relieved.

If Mūzeg decides to seriously take over the three countries then it may first want Lemuse in order to perform a pincer attack.

In order to save up power, Mūzeg had sent its military to the north and west so that expectation could be put off for now but,

“At the moment that the King of Mūzeg is sure that he could completely crush the entire military strength of the three countries, he would probably swoop down on them immediately”

That is probably the time limit.

“...we have to do something before that”

He placed his head in his hand and with his fingers kept drumming his cheeks.

If we start thinking about things then there is no end.

Every single one of them is a possibility.

The most important issue is the one going on right now.

Lemuse is in a transparent situation, it has no colors.

From the fact that Mūzeg did not really seem to care much about Lemuse, it could be guessed that Lemuse had not even entered into its sight.

If he thought back on it, then that meaningless [[servitude]] might unexpectedly not have been a bad option after all. Hasim laughed as he thought that.

“—Haha, it might just be possible that future historians might laud the current situation of Lemuse where it doesn't matter whether it exists or not as, [[the greatest accomplishment of that foolish king]] ”

It's possible that the King of Mūzeg thought, “Even if we leave this king alone, it doesn't seem like there would be any problems”.

Those words which Hasim spoke while laughing, in time, ended up becoming the truth.

“By the way, what happened to that group of Demon Lords?”

Hasim suddenly asked about the most important matter at hand.

“We still do not have any information on them. As you had predicted, a search of the closest town east of Lindholm Sacred Mountain did not bring up any traces of them. The residents had also not seen any rare travellers either”

“—I see, I see. I'm quite relieved knowing that they are smart enough to do that. —If that is the case then they went to either, <Duchy of Neuce Gauss> or <Tot Republic> huh”

“I have already stationed people in both places”

“Well, for now it’s fine if they’re not caught by Mūzeg or the other Demon Lord hunting countries but, as soon as possible, I would like to get in touch with them and invite them to Lemuse”

Saying so, Hasim placed his hand on his chin and groaned in thought.

“—What is left is, which route they would take from Neuce Gauss... They definitely wouldn’t head towards Mūzeg. Since they are able to run like that, they would either take a detour through the south or head directly east”

“Is it not possible that they might go to through the northeast and pass through the three countries?”

“Most probably. They probably... won’t head towards the three countries”

Hasim spoke, while deep in thought.

“They are better than the countries that concentrate on Demon Lord hunting but, there is a catch when it comes to the three countries as well. If there is a Demon Lord which knows that in their group then they would want to stay away as much as possible”

When he thought of that catch, his thoughts hastened and his expression warped with frustration.

“The three countries have also tried their hands at it once... At an act very similar to Demon Lord hunting.

Right now they are against the idea of Demon Lord hunting and I will also, once again, tell them not to do it at the Summit of Three Kings but, even then, the fact that they have done it before will not disappear. It will remain etched into history”

Hasim already knew that the three countries had already tried their hands at something similar to Demon Lord hunting. It was at the time when Mūzeg suddenly turned around and became aggressive so they were in a situation where, even if they wanted to stop they were not able to. However, it does not change or excuse the fact that they have tried their hands at it.

“It may not have been [hunting] , well, it was something similar...”

To be exact, they had somewhat forcefully, made the descendents of the Demon Lords hiding out in their countries to stand in the battlefield.

That was why, compared to the Demon Lord hunting that would end up killing the Demon Lords for no real reason, it was an act that could still be forgiven.

However, in the end, the fact that they had forcefully made them fight and also the fact that some Demon Lords had [been left to die] ended up becoming problems.

As a result, a situation that looked like Demon Lord hunting had surfaced there.

It's different but it's not different.

It was a rather subtle difference.

Although Lemuse had once ended up in a similar desperate situation but, it had not laid its hands on any Demon Lords which is why it was ridiculed as idiotic. The three countries were not idiotic which is probably why they took those steps.

In reality, because they used the Demon Lord's powers in such a way, they were somehow able to chase Mūzeg away.

“It might be the fate of being in the era of war that causes such contradictions to occur. Though, I don't think that it is okay to put all the blame for your own sins onto the era of war”

Hasim looked out of the window with a sad expression.

Even if he were to invite Demon Lords to Lemuse, even if he were to properly make it through the negotiations,

—If we let them die, then it's exactly the same in the end.

The moment that happens, Hasim knew that he would, himself, end up destroying the noble, graceful impression that it has built up so far.

Failure would mean hell.

Just winning is not enough.

They have to win while protecting the Demon Lords.

In the first place, they require the strength of the Demon Lords in order to fight with Mūzeg.

—Even though that's the case, wanting to save the Demon Lords is basically like putting the cart before the horse huh.

However, even then, they had to cross over that extremely thin rope with a headwind. Their logic that was like that thin rope could, at any moment, be cut off by contradictions like a violent gust.

—But, I'll cross over no matter what.

Hasim was only looking forward.

If someone looked at Hasim wholeheartedly crossing over that thin rope, they would only be able to see him as a madman.

If seen from the perspective of someone who couldn't see what was on the other side of that rope, he might have looked like a fanatic running after his god's idol.

However, Hasim alone did not doubt that the 『scene』 he wants is on the other side of that rope.

In time, the man who would be known as the <Mad King> to some people was trying to take another step on that thin rope.

Chapter 36

Over the City's Night Lights, a Dragon Flies

With the trusted backing of the capital owned by Sherwood firm, having been able to purchase those swift horses quite easily, the middle-aged monocle, Zaido, was finally heading back to the firm's branch office after making the payment for it.

It's already night time.

Thanks to the fact that he had to run around the duchy, his body felt rather heavy.

When he thought that he had finally finished the work for that day and breathed a sigh, in one go all of his fatigue caught up with him.

Since it would be troublesome going all the way to his office, he headed towards the long reception desk near the entrance of the firm, sat down on it and heaved another sigh.

At that time, a strange sound entered Zaido's ears.

At first, it sound like something was scraping against the walls of the basement, a very small sound.

However, gradually, very gradually, it started becoming louder.

What ended up being conclusive evidence was hearing sounds like *Gan* or *Gashan*. Sounds which were reminiscent of something being broken apart.

“ ... ”

He immediately went on guard, wondering what was down there. Maybe it was a thief or something like that.

No no, that would definitely not be it.

As the manager of the office, he placed locking up as a task that was more important than anything else.

There was no way that he would commit such a 『blunder』 after all this time.

In that case, Zaido's thoughts veered in a different direction.

At that moment, Zaido had a bad feeling.

Around noon, there had been a 『serious incident』.

『It's probably fine now』

That man with the otherworldly looks and snow-white hair had said those words.
It's fine. —What is?

That, land dragon is.

As soon as Shaw and the others left, Zaido immediately went to the basement and checked up on the land dragon.
It seemed to have been sleeping.

It was not the precarious sleeping figure from earlier where it was hard to tell if it was still alive or dead.

It was sleeping calmly, as if it had already recovered its stamina.

If this was sold, it would definitely lead to a ginormous profit.

Zaido also agreed to those words of Shaw's as if it was only natural.

Feeling satisfied that, if it was sleeping this well then it was fine. With those thoughts he went out to town to make the payments for the horses as he was running out of time.

—That was a failure.

Zaido finally realised his own mistake.

Trying to keep a 『healthy land dragon』 in that kind of a cage was his own foolishness.

The reason he had kept the land dragon in that kind of a cage was because he knew

that it was down with the fatal draconic disease.

Since that was a disease that had no cure, he felt that kind of a cage was enough.

However, that white haired 『monster』 had cured the land dragon's fatal draconic disease.

“...crap”

Seriously, I really do lack many things.

Recovering its stamina and recovering its original strength as a land dragon, that kind of a cage...

Baki

Suddenly Zaido heard an explosive sound.

It was right behind him.

From right behind his back, he heard that sound.

The entrance to the basement should be in that direction.

Zaido fearfully turned his head back.

“——Gyauuu”

The land dragon with black scales had stuck its head out of the basement's entrance. Zaido felt like his heart would stop.



——Hasn't it become even bigger now?

What did that monster, Merea, do to this land dragon anyway?, thought Zaido as he looked at the land dragon that had stuck its head out of the basement entrance.

When they carried it down to the basement, they somehow managed to carry it through the entrance while it was in the cage.

However, that land dragon could hardly manage to fit its neck through that entrance.

The *baki* sound earlier was the sound of something cracking when the land dragon's

body got stuck in the entryway.

Of course, it was the ground which had cracked.

“Wa, wa, wa, wait up! —Okay, calm down. Don’t move from there”

They say that children who sleep well grow up well but this is definitely a different dragon.

Even a sleeping child has a limit.

This is no longer in the same dimension as a growth spurt.

Firstly, he waved both his hands and urged it to calm down.

Zaido could no longer care for appearances.

He had to completely neglect the composure of an adult and in an as easy to understand as possible way, he used his body language and gestures to get his meaning across.

As a decent adult who was nowhere near being old, his way of hopping over may have seemed rather pathetic but, the man in question, Zaido, was way too terrified to care about it.

If any human came across a wild land dragon, he knew exactly how easily that person would lose their lives.

Even though the other party right now is a child but if it swung its tail even once, he would without a doubt, die.

That was how dangerous it was.

“Gyau”

“There there, I get it, I get it. —Is this it, you want something to eat?”

“Gyau?”

While saying that, he noticed that the land dragon had small pieces of the trade goods in the basement flying out of its mouth.

“...a, ahh, is that so, you already ate huh...”

So it had already eaten its fill.

Zaido felt like crouching down and holding his head.

It was a loss.

Without fail, it was a loss.

“Gyau!”

It seemed to be speaking something but even if it did speak to him, there was no way for him to know what was being said.

He of course could not speak dragon language. He seriously wished that it had spoken while that white monster was around.

Compared to the time it couldn't even speak because of how weak it was from the fatal draconic disease, it was rather lively right now.

It might be possible that the fatal draconic disease was suppressing even the growth of this land dragon.

—Give me a break.

Zaido prayed to the god of money who he believed in.

Once more, with a *baki baki* sound, the floor of the office creaked.

“O, oii!”

“Gyaauu”

The land dragon was trying to force its way out of the basement.

—How exactly am I supposed to stop it?

He realised that he had absolutely no way to stop it.

At that moment, the land dragon which had managed to get half of its body out, suddenly noticed something and turned its neck towards it.

“Gya?”

With its nose twitching, it started smelling a certain item.
Zaido immediately realised what that item was.

“That monster’s...”

They were Merea’s clothes.

After duking it out with the land dragon, he had changed out of it because they had become ragged.

There weren’t any huge rips but, it would have been strange to go outside in those ragged clothes so Shaw had him change out of it.

In exchange, the clothes he had been wearing were still lying on the long table in the firm.

The land dragon was smelling those clothes.

“Gyau!!”

It raised its head in a rather happy mood.

It probably said something on the lines of, “This is it!” or, “That person’s!”. Zaido somehow guessed that this was what was being said.

As soon as he guessed that, at the same time, he came up with a prospect.

“Do, don’t tell me, you...”

“Gyauu!!”

The worse the premonition, the easier it becomes reality was a saying that Zaido now held a firm belief for.

Meki

With a loud sound, the land dragon managed to free itself from the basement entryway and make its way outside.

—It, it’s huge...

Seriously, when did it turn out like this.

It still can't be called an adult dragon but it looks nothing like it did as a young dragon.

Of course, the entrance of the firm would never be able to fit this large a body.

Also, there was one more bad premonition he had.

—it plans on [chasing] after him.

There was no longer any room for doubt.

The land dragon looked even more pumped up the moment it smelled Merea's clothes.

The direction its nose was pointed at was the east.

Without a doubt, it is the direction in which Merea and the others are headed.

He had no idea what kind of sensory organ it used to find out their direction but the dragon species were not known for complying to a human's common sense.

"O, oi! Wa, wait? Don't make a sound okay? Woah... it's that, break it down without making a single sound"

He no longer had an idea as to what he, himself, was saying anymore.

Zaido understood that he was completely incapable of stopping that land dragon now. It was to the point where he was just glad to not have been eaten.

That was why, although it was fine for the land dragon to leave but it would be a problem if it stood out too much.

If by any chance it was seen by the Mūzeg army giving chase, then that may lead to the worst case scenario of them realising where Merea and the rest were.

—No, well, just because a dragon was running through a town, you wouldn't normally think that there are any Demon Lords involved.

However, it would definitely be an odd situation.

When they scouted to find out about the situation, they may end up butting heads.

“Quietly. —Understand? Quietly now?”

“Gyau?”

Seems pointless.

As if to say, “What are you saying?” the land dragon tilted its head to the side. For a moment he felt that it was rather cute but in the next moment, a feeling of despair took over.

Zaido decided to make some useless efforts.

He opened the front door and with his hands gestured for the land dragon to leave through it.

It was night time after all.

It was a deep dark night and since it was the back of an alleyway, their figures could not be seen.

To the custom of only having social meetings indoors was something that he was thankful for, for the first time.

It was much better than it being done outside.

After that, it would be best if the land dragon could get out of the duchy without making a single sound... Probably.

“Gyauu!”

As if it understood what Zaido had said, the land dragon quietly and slowly stuck its head out of the entryway.

“Oh”

In the next moment,

“Gya”

As if to say that it is too troublesome, the land dragon, very flashily, destroyed the entryway and went outside.

“Ahh...”

For a moment the repair costs flashed through Zaido’s mind.

“Just do whatever you want now...”

Now that it had come to this situation, there was absolutely nothing he could do.

As soon as it got outside, the land dragon spun its neck around and rushed over the ground with its tail bent.

It barely managed not to destroy the buildings in the way but well, the firm was already in a sad state.

Zaido who gave up on controlling that situation, seriously watched over the land dragon’s movements.

“Gyau~”

He saw the land dragon get into the posture to jump.
It braced its limbs and while flapping its wings... it flew.

No, it jumped.

A land dragon cannot fly.
However, it shot up into the air with such force that it unconsciously made him think that it flew.

The ground that took the brunt of the dragon’s leap, caved in and the aftermath of that jump blew Zaido away.

“Uooaah!”

The walls of the firm once again creaked and another building, further away had its lamp pop with a loud sound.

There were voices wondering what was going on but, they would probably not understand what was going on anymore.

Zaido who crashed into the long table, stood up while rubbing his bruised spots and quickly ran outside and looked at the land dragon which was getting smaller and smaller.

“It’s oddly bad at jumping isn’t it...? That part is still young huh...
Haa... , I beg of you, please don’t land in a strange place”

There was nothing else Zaido could do but to wish for that.

Chapter 37

A Monster Without Fangs

Serius Brad Mūzeg had just climbed down from Lindholm Sacred Mountain and was waiting for the Mūzeg troops to gather.

He had already issued orders to many of the corps and also sent a report to the kingdom.

Serius was now waiting for the practitioner corps, who had been sent first to scout, to return.

“We were beaten quite miserably huh”

“Yes, I humbly apologize”

“You’re not the one who was beaten though”

A member of the imperial guard replied to Serius’ murmur.
He was a young man.

“Mihai, how old are you this year?”

“...Ha? Ah, uhm, I have turned 19 this year”

When Serius suddenly asked him that question, the young imperial guard raised a hysterical voice before fixing his collar in a fluster and replied.

His silk-like long blond hair shook left and right matching his movement, clearly showing the nervousness that the young imperial guard was feeling.

Serius laughed when he saw that.

“Hmm, quite young. Managing to get into the imperial guard with that age huh”

Serius spoke up in an exaggerated manner.
Seeing that, the young imperial knight, Mihai, replied,

“The one who selected me for the imperial knights was you, you know, Serius-sama...? I would have been fine with just being your attendant but...
I am happy to be able to accompany Serius-sama to the battlefield but, the rest of the soldiers will not be able to accept it...”

Mihai spoke with a troubled voice.

Mihai was originally Serius’ exclusive attendant.

Although he was younger than Serius, from his childhood, there were a few situations that ended up with him taking care of Serius on a day to day basis.

However, although he was doing his work at a place completely separated from the battlefield, Serius selected him to be a part of his imperial guard recently.

The reason was clear.

“You have a rare talent with the sword. The other soldiers would probably not bad mouth you that much either. At the very least, in Mūzeg, as long as you belong to the country, you’ll be respected.
—Moreover, you already showed your skill to the others haven’t you?”

“Ho, however...”

Mihai, who might even be mistaken as a woman at first sight because of his good looks, had a troubled look on his face as he looked down.

“Are you that worried about it?... Well, if something happens just let me know”

“I could never bother Serius-sama with such private matters. If something happens, I shall handle it at that time”

“I really don’t get whether you’re being strong or weak”, saying so, Serius laughed once more.



After waiting for a while, the captain of the practitioner corps finally reached the foot of the mountain.

With his body wrapped in black clothing, there were multiple black bloodstains on his skin.

He reached the base of the mountain to where Serious was.

“Good work”

“No, I have no excuse. I will accept any punishment for this”

“You’re getting ahead of yourself... You’re still alive, don’t just go throwing that life away. Mūzeg will use whatever it can use. So, if you’re alive, then use that life for Mūzeg”

“Yes...! I shall definitely live up to the mercy you have shown me”

“Yeah”

After having such an exchange with the captain who was kneeling in front of him, he moved onto the main topic.

“Raise your head. What is your report?”

“...Yes”

Serious was slightly disturbed because the captain looked like he had aged considerably compared to how he was before being sent out as a scout.

“...I, it was a demon god, your highness. There was a demon god living on the mountain top of Lindholm sacred mountain”

“...Demon god”

Serious remembered the snow-white haired man who blew away his <Hammer of the Earth King>.

“Was it a man with white hair?”

“!! That’s right, it was that man!”

As soon as that was brought up, the captain trembled.
It was quite easy to understand that he was trembling in fear.

“That man copied our white light cannon in an instant and offset it immediately”

“...what?”

Copy a technique and offset it.

Serius remembered one man when he heard about this.

It was a story of the past. Long ago, much before he himself was born.

However, it was a story that hit home.

“...It’s like a reverse technique huh”

That was what the <Technique God> Flander Crow was known for.

To be precise, it wasn’t just copying the technique and shooting it back but instead was a much more marvelous act.

It was the act of deciphering the opponent’s technique in a moment and weaving the corresponding technique to offset it.

That technique might look similar but that is only because it uses the opponent’s technique as a base for the reversal technique and it is considerably more complicated than just imitating a technique.

The only one who was capable of doing something like that was only someone who had the magic eyes which specialised in deciphering a technique’s phenomenon. Over and above anything,

“So there was someone in this age who had the technique prowess at par with Flander Crow?”

It was only someone who could create all the techniques and had the processing power to do that as well.

The work of great wisdom.

There were no words other than this that matched so well with that skill.

The magic eyes were definitely a threat since they could see through the basis of any and all techniques but the reason the technique god was called the technique god was because his ability when it came to techniques was abnormally high.

Moreover, even without the magic eyes, if the opponent's technique was slightly slower, the very moment that he weaves his technique, the technique god could weave the corresponding technique before the opponent.

"Furthermore, he finished weaving it much before we did and shot it towards us..."

"Ahh..."

I see, thought Serius.

When he spoke about that, the captain's voice trembled the most till then. That had completely crushed his self-confidence.

"That was a monster, your highness"

If the story is really true, there was a chance of it being a lie after all.

—Was it really the son of Flander Crow and Leilas Lif Lemuse?

He couldn't help but think that despite the glaring inconsistency in the timelines.

"...if that is true then were there really some spirits there?"

If there was one reason he could give for his prediction, quite forcefully at that, was that there was something that was on the mountain top.

"...Were there any other beings on that mountain top other than the Demon Lords?"

“No, there were none”

“Any spirits?”

“There were none on the mountain top. Just...”

“Just?”

“There were many gravestone like objects there. They seemed to have some words engraved on them but, I definitely did not have the time to read what was engraved. Since I had to carry my subordinates that had been wounded, down to the base of the mountain as soon as possible”

“...I see”

Serius looked up at the mountain top.

His gaze could not reach the mountain top that was covered in a white haze.

At this point, he couldn't very well climb back up to the top once more.

Especially since he had confirmation that there was nothing up there except for some gravestones.

However, personally, he was extremely curious about those gravestones.

They were short on time but, eventually he wanted to go and check those gravestones out.

“...Understood. Good job with the report. Well then, I want to hear the opinions of the other members of your corps, is that fine?”

“Of course”

“Alright”

Serius was waiting for the reply for the message that he had sent back to the kingdom. He had already had many soldiers head to the east and chase after the Demon Lords.

He himself wanted to chase after them as well but, his methods were somewhat different from his subordinates.

While waiting for what would become the key for that slightly heretical method, he decided to extract as much information from his subordinates as he could.

When he did that, Serious realised an extremely important information.

The reason he was known as the darling child of the age of war. In the face of a frighteningly sharp opponent, he was able to observe and figure out an important information.



While thanking every soldier in the practitioner corps, he asked them for further details on various matters.

Especially, the people with 『abnormal wounds』, he made sure to ask them how they managed to get those wounds.

“...Those that were bisected basically received an immediate death sentence huh”

Among the 『survivors』 around him currently, there weren't many who had sword wounds.

Most of the ones who had cuts had apparently died and were left at the mountain top.

When they were carrying the wounded down from the sacred mountain, the corpses would have just gotten in the way so they decided to leave them behind.

“Your decision was correct, captain. Their funeral will be something that I, myself, will conduct in due course”

Serious spoke with a sunken expression on his face.

Normally, he wouldn't let his feelings show too much on his face but at that time, he definitely had a rather sad look about him.

The captain of the practitioner corps who was nearby felt thankful that the Serious who they revered had such a sad expression for those who had died.

He prayed that the ones who had died felt the same way too.

After a moment had passed, Serious changed back to his severe expression and returned to interrogating them.

“If it were cuts then was it the <Sword Emperor> ?”

“Yes. It was that woman who is the descendent of that Elisa family and was quite skilled herself. She would cut down even the techniques with that demon sword of hers so, it was rather troublesome when she got into close range...”

“In the first place, we sent the practitioner corps so that they could control the situation from a distance and not allow her to get into close range but I suppose that the presence of the other Demon Lords kind of ruined that plan huh”

Serius groaned as he heard what happened from a practitioner who had a strange black mark on his chin.

“I really want that. If the demon sword was handed to a master then it could do wonders with a single swing. Just being able to use its ability to cleave phenomenons alone would end up becoming a huge benefit... Over and above that, the <Seven Imperial Weapons> are said to have a much larger hidden power in them”

In the previous era’s age of war, at one time there were many demon weapons that were spread around.

At that time, wars were mainly won based on an individual’s combat abilities, strategies and group tactics. However, as more and more countries did that, the difference in strength wasn’t that clear and at that time, a particular country developed such [[weapons]].

If it was said in another way, it was the pattern of the evolution of war.

From fists to a club, from a club to arrows, from arrows to a sword. For humans who were concentrated on war, their attention once more was concentrated on weapons which had already experienced much evolution.

At that time, the ones who prospered were the family of the <Sword Emperor> which had one of the demon weapons, the demon sword, passed down from generation to generation.

At present, the ones that Mūzeg had already confirmed were the families of the <Sword Emperor> Elisa, <Spear Emperor> Kasaris, <Mace Emperor> Goz and the

<Bow Emperor> Sil, those four but Serius had already destroyed the family of the <Spear Emperor> Kasaris.

Even now he couldn't really say that he had already figured out the characteristics of the weapons of the seven imperial weapons but, he had figured out that they all interfered with phenomenon.

The demon sword could cleave phenomenon, the demon spear could penetrate phenomenon, the demon mace could shatter phenomenon.

Though they were all weapons but they were able to compete against techniques and it was said that, [the more techniques prosper, the more valuable the weapons would become].

"I'm curious as to how they were made but even with the demon spear that I have, I haven't been able to figure out any use other than penetrating phenomenon after all..."

When Serius had killed the Spear Emperor, he had stolen his demon spear.

He used it at times but he had yet to figure out how to use any other powers other than phenomenon penetration.

He already knew that it had many other powers hidden within.

Such information was widely available.

However, they were all rather abstract and they still had not proven useful at all in figuring out important information related to the seven imperial weapons.

"The spear emperor refused to tell me till the very end as well... Well, let's just leave that be for now. We don't have the time to research it right now"

Saying so, Serius stopped thinking about that and then Serius noticed the black mark on the chin of that practitioner. It was as if he had been burned.

"How did you get that wound?"

"From that white demon..."

"..."

Serius suddenly had a strange feeling.

According to what he had heard so far, that white demon had quite the ability when it came to techniques.

Along with the fact that he had stopped Serius' <Hammer of the Earth King> , not to mention that he also seemed to have used lightning to attack.

Over and above that, when it came to close quarter combat, he showed that he excelled at that as well.

When he learnt that information, the first thing that came to Serius' mind and what spilt out without him thinking much about it was,

"You..."

It was a genuine doubt.

"...why are you still alive?"



The practitioner felt his jaw hanging as he tried to chew through the words that Serius uttered.

"Eh, ah... no, well..."

Might he have done something to get on Serius' bad side?

The practitioner immediately thought that.

What Serius said had not been reproachful but had been a genuine doubt. However, the practitioner was unable to take it as such.

『Why did you come back alive after showing such disgraceful behaviour?』, could it be that Serius was thinking something like that in anger now that he heard about his subordinate's uselessness, was what the practitioner couldn't help but think.

There was also the fact that Serius kept his solemn expression as it was and let out a sense of coercion at all times which even he himself was not quite aware of.

That beautiful, statue like sour look of Serius' helped increase that sense of crisis in

the practitioner's mind.

"A, ahh, your highness, as soon as he received the blow, I stepped in between so..."

At that point, the captain raised a flustered voice and explained instead.

"...is that so"

Serius stroked his chin with a finger with an unsatisfied expression.

However, he immediately raised his head and looked at a different practitioner.

Serius was looking for another practitioner with a similar burn wound.

The other practitioners wouldn't help but feel nervous as they kept glancing at Serius, who soon found his intended target.

"...You, why are you alive?"

The same words came out.

Serius had pointed at a man who had a burn wound on his neck.

At that point, the captain jumped in once more,

"Y, your highness..."

"Wait, this is just strange... [Not possible] "

When Serius said that, there was no way that the captain could continue to speak up.

The practitioner who was pointed at could only look at Serius while quaking in his boots in a breathless state.

It was like a frog being glared at by a snake.

"Let's believe what the captain said about the strike to the chin. Or it could even be construed as the strike to the chin was a precursor to a fatal strike. However, what about that one... It's the [neck] you know? The mark looks like it was left by a hand gripping the neck. That is an immediate death sentence.

His neck was grabbed by someone covered in lightning and still... [he's alive] "

A mark left by a hand gripping the neck.

If they considered the information that the white demon covered himself in lightning then it could be guessed that the wound was left behind by that lightning covered hand

grabbing his neck.

“Did you have your neck grabbed by that demon?”

“Ye, yes...”

It was as expected.

“Ho, however, I was immediately helped by my comrades...”

Those words didn’t even enter Serius’ ears.

Even if they did, he would probably laugh it off as “Not possible”.

When his neck was grabbed, [it would be normal to have his throat crushed].

There would be no time to save that person anymore. A few moments is all that would be needed to do it. The demon from the information so far should be capable of doing that.

If that is the case, the very fact that they were able to save him makes the situation rather suspicious.

Serius looked around at all the other practitioners and noticed that most of them had [wounds that would be fatal normally].

Suddenly a thought rose up in Serius’ mind.

“Impossible...”

There were too many burn wounds.

The very fact that one man managed to make so many wounds against so many people would show just how dangerous he was but, that fact held a different meaning for Serius.

They left the bodies behind.

Normally, if it had been the strikes of that strong a person then most of them should have died. However many of them were still alive.

However, no one else seemed to think that fact was strange at all.

Most probably, because of the overwhelming power that the demon showed, they didn't think too much about those facts and were just extremely scared.

However, Serious was different.

"That guy..."

The corners of Serious' mouth raised up slightly.
It was a smile.

The captain and all the practitioners there certainly saw that cruel smile on Serious' face.



"Can he not kill...!"



They were the eyes of a predator.

He had found a weakness of his enemy, a way to go towards victory.

It was a scary smile.

It was nothing like the smile of the man who was thanking his subordinates a little while back.

It was instead a [[warrior's smile]].

"This monster has no [[fangs]].

——Hahaha!! [[A monster without fangs]] huh...! Hahahahahaha!"

The soldiers there, once again, saw the reason that he was known as the darling child of the age of war.

"Ha..."

Serious who laughed loudly for a while suddenly stopped laughing.

“—No wait. On the other hand, it could even be seen as there being such a large difference in strength that he could afford to go easy”

Serius was a staunch believer in the fact that humans had animalistic instincts. In other words, 『Even humans who are cornered will bare their fangs』. That was what he thought.

That was why, while noticing that a monster doesn't have fangs, he could also use that to guess the level of power that the monster has.

—It is of the upper class. 『Quite the upper class of power』.

Although it wasn't the main force, the practitioner corps were definitely among his excellent subordinates, and yet he was able to reduce them to that state. The practitioner corps could not even manage to make that monster bare his fangs.

“...”

If they do manage to corner that monster then will that monster bare his fangs? If he did bare his fangs then, exactly how dangerous would that be?

He could... not imagine it.

“...this is dangerous”

Although at first he had thought that he had found a weakness but suddenly, he felt like he had instead found a landmine that should never be touched.

“Your highness, it has arrived”

While Serius was thinking about these things, suddenly he heard Mihai's voice. The item that they had been waiting for had apparently already arrived.

“Yeah, I'll be right there”

—The rest is only after I actually see him huh.

Serius had every intention to chase after them. Those Demon Lords who ran off to the east, he would of course chase after them.

He had already made all the preparations.
Now it was just a matter of who is able to outsmart whom.

“A mere 20 Demon Lords shouldn’t think that they can match my Kingdom of Mūzeg”

Although he felt a slight fear about that mysterious demon but he offset that feeling with his desire to win.

Whether it is a Demon God or a monster, he did not plan on fighting it from the front and losing.

—“I’m carrying a kingdom on my back.

That was Serius’ pride as a warrior as well as a prince.

Chapter 38

Does That Monster Really Have No Fangs?

The Demon Lords rode on the horses prepared by Zaido and rode off towards Lemuse from the east gate of the Duchy of Neuce Gauss.

Each of them had properly managed to prepare the items that they had been assigned to, because of which their luggage had increased quite a bit.

Since the number of horses increased, the carriage was no longer needed, so naturally their speed increased exponentially.

If they considered that they were in such a situation, it wouldn't be wrong to think that they were sailing rather smoothly.

Such a smooth sailing situation, if looked at from the point of view of people like Shaw who had a 『certain fear』, could instead be seen as a strange situation instead.

“Everyone is rather excellent huh”

Though he said that out loud but he felt a strong sense of astonishment inside.

That wasn't astonishment that stemmed from the other Demon Lords being excellent but rather stemmed from the fact that 『not a single person was left behind』.

In reality, he had expected at least one of them to suddenly up and vanish without saying a word to any of them.

However, they returned.

The moment everyone gathered once more, he felt like the bonds that were barely there between all of them had become slightly stronger.

He was rather surprised at himself for actually feeling rather happy at that fact.

“—Let’s first just say that everything was handled perfectly. As a merchant, I feel extremely happy that we have managed to reach the result that we wanted to reach in the first place.

...well, there were a few worrisome points with a few individuals though”

Saying so, Shaw faced forward with a merchant-like smile.

The one riding at the forefront of the group was the <Sword Emperor> Elma.

Everyone had already noticed this but she seemed to have quite the excellent skill in riding horses.

Also, her instincts like that of a wild animal spread a rather wide and effective web of caution that was extremely helpful to the other Demon Lords.

Due to which, after leaving the Duchy of Neuce Gauss, the formation was naturally created with Elma at the forefront.

However, Shaw also had an inkling that her obstinate desire to ride at the forefront might have a completely different reason to it.

—Could it be enthusiasm?

It felt like there was a rather dark and heavy air around Elma.

There was of course no way that he could actually see it but everytime they moved to the sides and he saw her expression, he couldn’t help but think that.

Elma’s expression, even when compared to the other Demon Lords was rather stiff.

In this situation, it was rather difficult to tell her to loosen up but even then, her stiff expression really stood out.

—Could it be that she is feeling guilty for having brought Mūzeg after everyone here?

Shaw had such vague thoughts. It was all based on his own guesswork so, there was no way for him to actually call her out on it.

However, if he were to believe that guess, then to connect that thought,

—It could be that, Ms. Elma is standing at the forefront so that she could use herself as a shield in case something does happen.

More vague thoughts drifted into his mind.

Neither of those thoughts could establish a proper rational foundation though.

Shaw thought to himself that those thoughts really weren't like a merchant.

"...Is Elma, flustered?"

Suddenly, from next to Shaw, the gentle and kind voice of a lovable girl was heard.

"...Ms. Aiz"

"It's fine, with just Aiz"

When Shaw looked to the side, he could see Aiz hugging Marisa from the back. Aiz was riding on the same horse with Marisa.

It seemed that Shaw wasn't the only one who had seen through Elma's enthusiasm. The words coming out of her small mouth was proof of that.

"I would definitely like to call you that but that crazy maid probably wouldn't allow it. So I'll call you that when her guard is down"

"Fufu, that in itself would be rather thrilling, huh"

Shaw was surprised when he saw Aiz laughing, rather cutely.

—Oddly, she goes along with such talks as well huh, this little lady.

He thought that she would say something on the lines of, "It's not okay to bully Shaw" or, concisely say, "Don't!" but he really did not expect her to say, "That, sounds like fun" with a happy expression and a lovely laugh.

—Rather, this little lady may be much tougher mentally than Ms Elma.

Based on how she was on the golden ship as well, Shaw had those thoughts.

“In that case, I’ll also, call you Shaw-san, till then”

“Yeah, understood”

“Money-grubber is more than enough for this man and I definitely will not allow him to call your name without any honorifics”

“Wait, please don’t look at me with such a glare full of caution. I really don’t want to participate in something where I am in such a disadvantage!”

Marisa spoke up with a look filled with despise pointed at Shaw. Shaw on the other hand, just shrugged and while letting it slide, moved onto the earlier topic. He seemed to be quite used to this now.

“...Well then, as far as Ms. Elma is concerned... , I wonder. If I were to guess then, she definitely had something on her mind, is what I would answer I suppose”

“What might that, be?”

“Hmmm... , maybe, the fact that she had brought along Mūzeg which had come chasing after her but she ended up getting the other Demon Lords mixed into the situation as well and probably regretting it?

Something like, [Because of me, the other Demon Lords are being chased by a powerful nation like Mūzeg]... like that?”

“Isn’t that, Elma’s, wrong impression?”

“...yes, that maybe so”

Shaw felt astonished once more. He was astonished to the point that, for a moment, no words came out.

Actually, rather than astonishment, he felt something similar to awe for the girl with silver colored eyes.

—She said some rather perceptive things huh.

Over and above everything else, she did not mince her words at all.

It is extremely hard to go to an enthusiastic person and say, “That is wrong. You’re

mistake”.

In this delicate distance that all the Demon Lords have with each other, even if not directly, to be able to say it would be a kind of courage... or maybe recklessness.

Even then, she said it completely unfazed.

That lack of hesitation, could it be she said it after having understood everything or was it the innocence of her age?

—...

It was the former.

He did not have any reason for believing that.

He knew that he would be a failure as a merchant with that.

However, when he saw the look in her eyes, he instinctively knew the answer.

As if she had already guessed what was going on through Shaw’s mind, Aiz spoke up once again.

“After all, everyone, decided to run this way, right?”

“Yeah, that is exactly true... Or more like, the one who first suggested that we run to the east was me after all”

When Shaw said that, Marisa who was in front of Aiz, spoke up.

“In that case, take responsibility and let the horse ride you from now on. —Come now! Let the horse climb onto your back! Neigh!”

“That’s so tyrannical! At such a place! —Ah! You just smirked didn’t you?!”

“I did not. What are you saying? You rotten...”

“Marisa-san, it’s not okay to say, too much, okay?”

“Okay, Aiz-sama. I took it a little too far”

As soon as Aiz spoke up, Marisa immediately bowed her head.

Since she was controlling the horse, she couldn't turn around but, while looking forward, she lowered her head and even her voice had a hint of gloom mixed in it.

The speed at which she changed her tone was terrifying.

Shaw, seeing Marisa apologise so obediently, spoke up,

“Mixed! I seriously have mixed feelings about this! I feel like I've won yet I've lost! No, I've definitely lost here!”

In the face of the huge difference in treatment, he didn't feel like he could think much further.

“Haa... , well. If we don't say something to Ms. Elma soon, it feels like she'd burst. —Also”

“Also?”

Shaw's words indicated that he had another topic that he wanted to switch over to, which cause Aiz to tilt her head.

“Before that, the man riding behind Elma, the one we call our 『Master』 — Merea Mea also seems to have some serious thoughts going on through his head”

Shaw had noticed that there was another man who had a mistaken tension gush out from inside.

In fact, even his bloodthirstiness was oozing out and was even harder to speak to than Elma.

“...As Merea-sama's maid, I really do wish to whatever it is I can for him but, if I were to approach him with no preparations then my body may be the one that would end up broken huh. —Ahh! A maid which is broken by her master is also...”

Marisa as well noticed that the air around Merea had changed.

In fact, in the current situation where they were extremely sensitive to bloodthirst, the other Demon Lords had also noticed the changes in Merea.

“Can that crazy maid please shut up? Also, have some consistency in your craziness”

“Is Merea, alright...?”

Elma who was running at the forefront and Merea who was slightly behind her were looked at by the other Demon Lords with a rather strange mood.



“ ... ”

Merea, who had finally gotten used to riding a horse, unexpectedly, did not get motion sick while riding it. He now turned his thoughts towards another direction. That direction was pointed at himself.

Merea was internally talking to himself.

—I understand... No, I thought that I understood.

That he did not have any [fangs].

—...

Merea also knew the feeling of hitting and stabbing someone.

It wasn't the first time that he had punched or hit someone.

He had done it many times with the heroic spirits as his opponents.

Even then,

—... I feel disgusted.

That feeling was still left over in his hand.

It was an [unknown feeling].

As he got used to it, he stopped being deeply emotional about it—The feeling of beating people up.

The feeling of hitting flesh, of having bones shatter.

Inhuman.

In order to actually understand what that was, he had to end up with a situation where he had to physically harm people.

However—it's different.

The moment I had wrapped my hands in the intent to kill, the feeling that came through—

—changed.

It was an [unknown feeling].

For Merea, that was an unbelievably disgusting feeling.

—I feel uneasy.

The feeling of something he already knew changing into something else was considerably worse than coming in contact with something for the first time.

That inhuman feeling of striking something was mixed in with a creepy feeling and came back.

It was the feeling of touching someone's life, for just a moment.

—... this is not good.

He understood.

He had always known.

However, even though he understood, that aversion he felt to that feeling was not something he could easily go against.

They do say that seeing is believing but, although it was touching and not seeing, the shock was still considerable.

—Damn it.

When he knew that he would be mixed in with wars, he thought that he had prepared himself.

After all this time, he kept remembering his past self who had nothing to do with fighting.

His character on the other side was half-hearted.

They were the roots of his soul.

The other side was the beginning.

—... 『However』 ,

Even Merea felt like he should do something about it.

Alos, for good or for bad, the 『let's do something about it』 that he immediately felt was deeply related to the fact that Merea was raised by the heroic spirits.



It could be possible that, since he was raised by the 『heroes』 before they died, Merea may have aimed to become a fantasy hero with the ideal image of a 『non-killing hero』.

Even if that was ridiculed as being reckless, the character that Merea had brought along, might have been the reason that he had let go of their necks.

Even so,

Merea was raised by 『heroic spirits』.

Heroic spirits were heroes but, at the time of their deaths, most of them had learnt of the depravity of humans.

Due to that, the ones who had regrets and remorse were the majority.

Those heroic spirits weren't, in the strictest sense, the actual heroes of the past.

They were transient beings who could only exist because of their lingering attachments and regrets.

In other words, they were a 『fragment』.

The reason they held onto that much of their reason even after becoming spirits was because of their mental strength and also had its roots in the fact that, like the other spirits on Lindholm sacred mountain, they were a 『torn off existence』.

With the depravity of humans as the reason, with their lingering attachments and regrets, what kind of direction would the fragments of the heroes take?

Even that Flander Crow had thought of the current era as permissible.

Thinking of himself as 『naive』, at the very least he had adopted a depravity which rivaled his good nature.

In the end, they had all, whether intentionally or unintentionally, when it came to aiming for the ideal hero——



Had given up.



That was why <Merea Mea> was there.

They themselves couldn't do it so they wanted to leave their wishes to someone else.

The body was made with the genes of all of them but the soul was a completely different being.

It was a being who had yet to give up.

At the end, it was a being that held up hope for them.

Although they themselves couldn't see it, however they thought that he could probably find a new path.

If things go well, they wanted him to take those genes to the places where they had once wanted to go. That was what they thought.

They were all aware that it was a selfish thing.

In that way, Merea was born.

In the end, they did not stop.

However, even those people, ended up noticing a certain [[peculiarity]].



The fact that Merea was starting to allow the depravity of the age or of people simply because he was being raised by them.



After coming to that world for the first time, and hearing the same kind of stories over and over again, he would of course end up thinking, [[Ahh, it's that kind of world]].

Although Merea's mind was grown up to a certain extent but when it came to that world, he was just like a newborn baby, completely blank.

Also, the fact that Merea did not go down from the mountain was another reason that this tendency was fostered.

When they noticed, they all could not help but sigh.

As if they were getting rid of everything that had piled up so far, their sigh naturally escaped from them.

Grief, relief, sadness, satisfaction, it was a sigh filled with a lot of different feelings.

In that way, it was a rather obvious course of action and they could be satisfied with that thought, which went further to show that they were, at the end of the day, nothing more than [[heroic spirits]].

That was why, in the end they decided to stop pushing the [[ideal image of a hero]] onto Merea.

“Live as you like” is what they said.

That was also their real intention.

At that moment, their regrets and attachments disappeared from them.

Whether that stemmed from the fact that they had given up on everything or whether they had found a different hope was something that only the individuals themselves would know.

However, the ones who created that ability of Merea’s which tried to quickly adapt to [[that kind of an era]] were undoubtedly the heroic spirits, his [[parents]].

Merea had adapted to the era a lot more than he himself had thought.

Whether that was a good thing or a bad thing was something that no one in that era could have made a judgement on.



While being shaken on top of the horse, Merea unified his spirit.

— I have to sharpen my [[fangs]].

He felt that he definitely needed fangs which could kill.

If he faced against enemies who he couldn’t go easy on, what would he do?



—The next time, I’ll definitely overcome this.



— Warn me that it would be too late if I do it after everything is over.

Prediction, realisation, reflection.

The most troublesome out of them, realisation, was something he gained at the mountaintop of that sacred mountain.

— You were rather lucky.

That reflection was something that could be done without [losing anyone].

If the enemy had been stronger then there was a chance of losing someone because of this.

— Realise that there is no second time.

Who was it that decided to be the hero for those Demon Lords?

Riding on that horse, Merea alone was sharpening his [fangs].

Although he hadn't grown them yet but when he actually would need it in the future, it would be pointless if they were dull because of being grown in a hurry.

That was why, Merea alone continued to sharpen his fangs internally.

The present was all he had.

In order to cross over the most difficult [first line] , Merea steadily sharpened his fangs.

The evaluation of Serius of Merea being a [monster without fangs] was, at that moment, correct.

However,

In the next battlefield, there was no guarantee that the monster would continue to stay like that.

Would Serius' prediction end up being true or would Merea manage to step over Serius' predictions.
The battle for that had already begun.

—



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